APRIL 15th ISSUE, 1931
VOL. LXXVIII No. 3

ADVENTURE

25 Cents

25c
in Canada
30 Cents

april 15

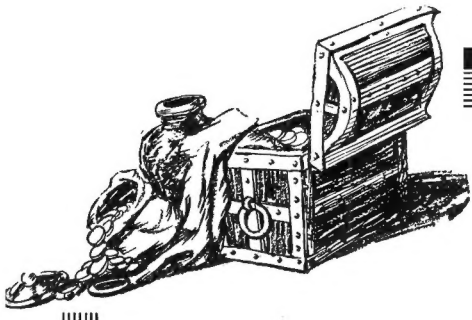
Adventure

Published Twice
A Month

STUNT STUFF

a
NOVELETTE
of the
BORDER
FLYERS
by
Thomson
Burtis

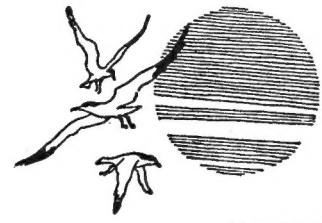
W.C. TUTTLE · REDVERS · GENERAL DE NOGALES · WILKESON O'CONNELL
R.V. GERY · L.G. BLOCHMAN · E.S. DELLINGER · REGINALD CAMPBELL



15 Issues

of

Adventure



AN EXCEPTIONAL OFFER TO LOVERS OF ADVENTURE . . .

JUST to get better acquainted . . . ADVENTURE is giving you this opportunity to have the next fifteen issues come by mail at a saving of close to 50% of the price you would pay at the newsstand. Lose yourself with *W. C. Tuttle* and Hashknife and Sleepy, with *Harold Lamb* and his crusading epics, with *Talbot Mundy* and his war dramas, with *Ared White* and his spy thrillers, with *T. S. Stribling, Arthur O. Friel, Raymond S. Spears, Georges Surdez, Gordon Young, Hugh Pendexter* and a gallant array of other writers. After a heavy day, go into a huddle with ADVENTURE and let the rest of the world go by.

for $2.00

USE THIS COUPON TODAY

ADVENTURE — Dept. A 81
The Butterick Publishing Company
161 Sixth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen: That Special Subscription Offer looks good to me. Here's my Two Dollars to bring me the next Fifteen Issues by mail.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

This Introductory Offer is good for new *Adventure* subscribers only. Good only in the U. S. A.

Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

CONTENTS

1931 for April 15th A. A. Proctor
VOL. LXXVIII NO. 3 EDITOR

Every Man Up . . . . . REDVERS 2
A Story of the World War

The Ritual Drums . . . . . T. SAMSON MILLER 17

Flashlight . . . . . L. G. BLOCHMAN 18
A Story of India

The Scar Of Fate . . . . . W. C. TUTTLE 34
A Mystery Novel of the West Three Parts—Conclusion

Finnegan . . . . . R. V. GERY 59
A Story of the Seafarers

Home Is The Boomer . . . . E. S. DELLINGER 70
A Story of Railroading in the Ozarks

Death In Tiger Valley . . . . REGINALD CAMPBELL 86
A Novel of the Siamese Jungle Three Parts—Part I

Against All Tradition . . . . WILKESON O'CONNELL 123
A Story of Old Indian Days

The Last Turk In Egypt . . . GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES 135
Memoirs of a Noted Soldier of Fortune

Tammany . . . . . F. W. HODGE 146

Stunt Stuff . . . . . THOMSON BURTIS 148
A Novelette of the Air and Racetrack

The Camp-fire 182 Ask Adventure 187 Trail Ahead 192

Cover Design by E. F. Wittmack *Headings by Harry Townsend*

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A., Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; B. C. Dunklin, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance. Single copy, Twenty-five Cents, in Canada Thirty Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian postage, 75 cents. Trade Mark Registered; Copyright, 1931, by The Butterick Publishing Company in the United States and Great Britain.

A War Story

EVERY MAN UP

By
REDVERS

THE FOUR signalers with the blue and white armlets denoting their special occupation paid no attention to the dying man in the corner of the dugout.

Their impassive faces were lighted by a candle placed at each corner of the old box which supported their cards and the piles of cigarets which constituted both the stakes and the chips.

In another corner of the old German dugout, which lay a full thirty feet below ground, sat still another member of the signal corps, placidly chewing gum like any ordinary telephone operator, as he plugged in the frantic parties who raved at him through the mysterious network of wires that ran from his signal box to the roof of the dugout up the stairs, and thence back overland to the various headquarters.

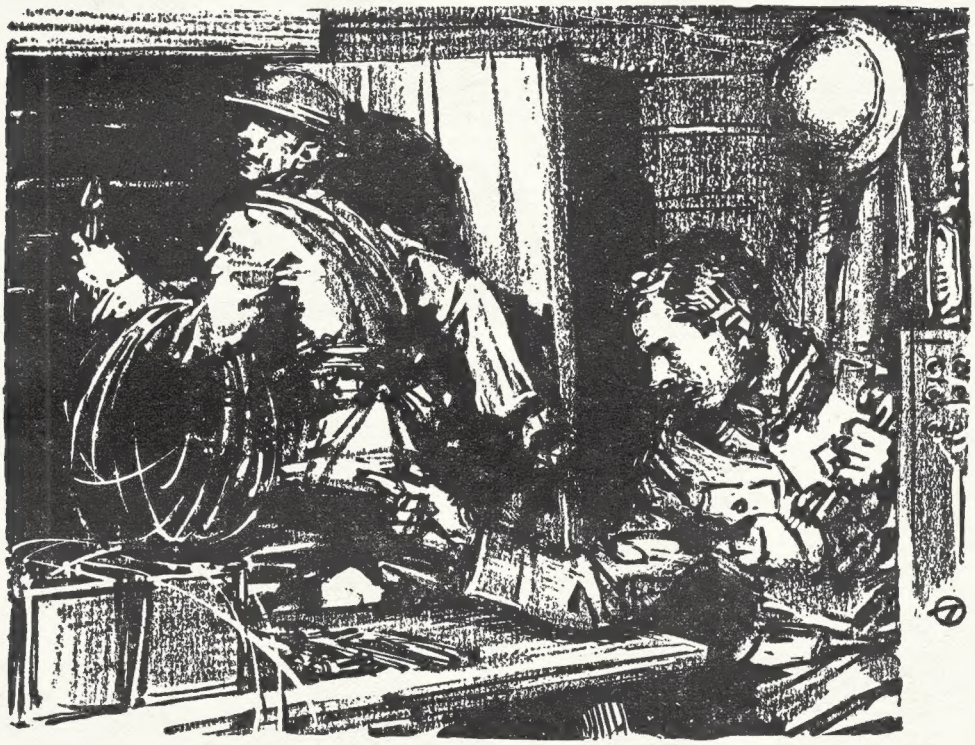
None would have imagined by this almost peaceful scene that one of the greatest battles of the year 1916 was taking place immediately overhead.

The steady thud of heavy shells landing on the roof of the dugout shook it continuously, but the men merely stopped their game long enough to curse pettishly as lumps of loose earth came down on the box or their heads.

"Why the hell didn't you say you wanted Brigade H.Q?" remarked the operator to some unseen person. "Whatcha think I am? A blasted mind reader?"

"Artillery? My dear man, all the blasted artillery we got is now— What? Oh, I'm sorry, sir; I didn't know—" He winked across at the players. "That

By the Author of "Cry Havoc"



was the C. O. of the Fifth Battalion."

"Give 'em hell, Red," said one unconcernedly.

"I was just going to when he said the shells were droppin' short."

The dying man groaned and stirred restlessly. One of the signalers left the game and approached the twisted figure. "Want anything, buddy?" he asked gently.

"Water—God, I'm thirsty," moaned the other.

Hastily the signaler held a water bottle to the other's lips.

"Here you are, old scout. Drink 'er down."

The other three signalers stopped the game and watched impassively while the wounded man drank deeply.

"Anything else, buddy?"

"No; I want to lie here. I just want—"

"All right, son; all right. Take it easy. You can lie there all day safe, old boy, as safe as can be, and as soon as night comes we'll get you out."

The dying man sighed.

"Thanks," he whispered. "Thanks—"

The signaler went back to his game.

"I raise her ten fags," he said.

"Called," said another.

The two remaining laid down their hands.

"Two pair."

"Not good enough, brother; three little treys."

"No. 11 line's cut. It's your turn, Brown."

The winner of the pot looked over at the operator.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Sure? I could almost hear the shell land."

Brown gathered up his winnings.

"That's the one time I was lucky," he said. "I got a call when I have most of your fags."

As he put them in his pocket the dugout trembled under the terrific thud of another shell.

Brown hesitated and then threw the cigarets back on the table.

"I guess you guys had better keep 'em," he said quietly and, going to a corner, picked up the repair equipment. He walked to the entrance, then turned. "So long, you guys."

"So long," they muttered; and Brown disappeared.

One of the players shuffled the cards nervously.

"It's the first time Brown ever did that," he said.

"Must think it's his— Oh, hell, this ruddy shelling is getting our goat."

"What will we play now?" inquired the third member of the group.

"I guess we'll have to make it rummy. Too small for poker."

"O.K. Deal 'em out."

The operator grinned as he listened with his earphones to the frantic conversation over the wires.

"The general's sure getting blazes tonight," he said.

"Why, what happened?" asked one of the players.

"Well, as far as I can make out, the Fourth Battalion got cleaned up when they tried to go through Fritzie's wire. The Third Battalion is held up at the mine crater—nearly wiped out by all accounts, and the supporting battalions fell right into a barrage of our own artillery."

"Did they get the line?"

"Oh, yes, they got to Fritzie's line and still hold it, but the C.O's are almost crying about their losses."

"A hell of a lot the general cares about that. He'll get another blasted medal out of it," remarked the youngest of the group, a slim, dark lad with shining brown eyes.

The operator listened raptly for a moment.

"Brown's working on the wire," he announced gleefully.

The three others grinned.

"Lucky old Brown," said one. "He's the luckiest devil for finding a break in the— What's the matter?"

The three men gaped at the operator, whose face was grimly set.

"Brown's got it," he said quietly.

Another signaler rose hastily.

"No. 11 did you say?"

"No. 11."

The man grabbed his equipment.

"So long, you guys."

"So long."

The youth with the shining eyes rose to his feet, his face anxious.

"Take good care, Jimmie," he said.

The one addressed as Jimmie, a short, laughing eyed man, grinned affectionately and patted the other on the shoulder.

"Did you ever see me act reckless, Kildare, old scout?"

Kildare smiled slightly but the worried expression did not leave his eyes.

"You know I got to have you to keep me warm at nights," he said.

For a moment their eyes met and a message of enduring friendship passed between them.

Jimmie turned hurriedly.

"Good Lord, kid, you're getting sentimental. So long—" And he hastened from the dugout.

Kildare slowly returned to the table and sat down, his eyes staring into space.

"Snap out of it, Kildare. Don't worry about Jimmie; he always comes back."

"Yes, I suppose so." The youth shrugged and smiled. "Well, I guess we will have to play crib now, Red."

"Yep, let's. A fag a point."

THE DYING man groaned and they turned toward him. There came a queer rattle, quite audible, and a sigh.

Getting up from their game, they went over and looked at the recumbent figure.

One knelt down and felt the man's pulse.

"Stiff as a board," he said briefly, and they went back to their game.

"No. 11's still out," said the operator.

"Heard from Jim?" asked Kildare.

The operator looked soberly at the boy.

"Not a darn word. He can't have got to the break."

Kildare jumped up and hastily ran toward his equipment, his face suddenly gray.

"I knew it; I knew it," he said.

"What do you know?"

"I had a feeling that something was going to happen to Jimmie." He turned to the operator. "By God, if anything has, you can put me with those colonels and what they think of the general. If—if Jim has got it I'll give him an earful about putting that line straight across open ground."

"Oh, maybe he's been held up, or only got a blighty," said the operator.

"Blighty hell! He's got more than a blighty." Kildare almost sobbed. "And believe me, I'll get that damned general if he has." He disappeared up the steps on the run.

The remaining signaler gathered up the deck of cards and grinned weakly over at the operator.

"I guess it's solitaire, now," he said, beginning to shuffle the deck.

The operator was now listening intently.

"I just heard the colonel of the Fourth tell the brigadier off."

"What did he say?"

"He said—and believe me, boy, he put emphasis in it—he said, 'By gad, General, you seem to have no feelings at all for my men. Do you know my casualties are four hundred and eighty-one—' "

"Four hundred and eighty-one! Hell and Maria!" ejaculated the other. "They must be getting it."

"The general says, 'Don't talk to me like that.' And the colonel almost sobs and says, 'It's time somebody talked to you like that. You are responsible for those men's lives—I wash my hands of it.'

" 'But you yourself agreed on this attack,' says the general, sort of soft and pleading.

" 'To hell with you and your attack,' the colonel tells him. 'You'll get another ruddy medal from the government, I suppose, while my men—' and he repeats the 'my men' almost crying—'my men that I brought out myself from Canada—my men, whose wives and mothers I promised I would take care of them, are dead. Dead, damn you!' And the colonel bangs the receiver down hard.

"I began to think the general must have forgotten to hang up, for he says nothing for quite a long time and then I heard a sort of sigh over the wire, and he puts the receiver back."

The signaler whistled softly.

"Has he been getting much of that?"

"He got practically the same thing from all the other C.O's, and even from the machine gun battalion. He gave the artillery hell for not observing the trenches properly and then just a little while ago he blows up the air force. And what he doesn't tell that flock of birds isn't worth recording."

"But everybody'll blame him, though," said the other softly. "Poor devil, I wouldn't be a brigadier general for all the money in the world. He gets it from the infantry for losing men, and I suppose even corp headquarters will give it to him for not getting it quicker. Heard from No. 11 yet?"

The operator listened intently.

"Not a thing."

The last and remaining signaler began to put on his equipment.

"Well, I guess it's me, now."

The operator nodded shortly, and cursed vehemently under his breath—the other was his mate.

"It looks like it."

There was a long silence as the two men stared at each other.

"Well, old pal, here's where we part," said the first, trying to smile.

"Wait—wait!" the other shouted, and listened intently. "He got through!"

"No!"

"Yes, wait."

The operator concentrated on some sounds coming over the wire, and finally a broad grin of relief spread over his face.

"It's him, all right, and he's putting through. Hello, hello, hello! Kildare? O.K?"

"Fine! Glory be, he got through!"

The operator rapidly connected the lines, and rang a bell.

"Hello, hello," he called. "Hello, is that brigade headquarters? Yes, line No. 11 is open again. Yeah, yeah—O.K."

He rapidly switched the plugs, listened for a moment.

"Hello? Is that the trench mortars? Yeah—O.K. The general wants to speak to you.

"You don't want to speak to the general? Well, you gotta—he's on the line now. . . . O.K."

The operator rapidly plugged in and at the same moment there was a series of thuds on the stairs. The two men turned to watch the opening. More thuds, and pettish curses.

"It's Kildare," said the operator.

A figure appeared in the doorway, carrying a heavy burden over his shoulder. Even in the half gloom they could see it was the body of his chum, Jimmie.

Without a word Kildare approached the bunks and laid the body gently on it. There was no doubt that life had fled, for it sagged helplessly. Gently he straightened it out.

At last the dead hands were folded carefully over the chest, and Kildare stood up.

There was a long silence. Then:

"I'll get the general for that! I'll get him, I'll get him!" he cried hysterically, and flung himself frantically on the body of his dead friend.

THE GENERAL was alone. That is, as much alone as it is possible for a general to be. His eyes stared unseeingly at the back of the signaler who operated the brigade headquarters telephone lines. His shoulders slumped in utter weariness.

The attack was over and, like all his previous efforts, had been successful.

"The operation was a success, but the patient died," he thought whimsically, and the shadow of a smile crossed his sagging face and almost feverish eyes.

The patient died . . .

He lifted himself wearily as if it took all the effort of his will to accomplish such a trivial task, and picked up the latest reports just laid before him on the little deal table. The last report was from the field ambulance.

> Sir:
>
> It will be necessary to detail two pioneer battalions to bury the dead, and not one as under your instructions of the fifteenth instant.

His eyes blinked and for a second his whole body seemed to shudder. Two thousand men to bury the dead! Two thousand— He looked unseeingly into space. Then, pulling himself together with a tremendous effort, he picked up a pile of reports.

> The First Battalion begs to report that the casualties for the seventeenth to the nineteenth instant have been two hundred and fourteen killed, five hundred and ninety-seven wounded, and five missing . . .

The Second Battalion begs to report that its casualties— The Third Battalion— The Fourth Battalion— The Brigade Reserve . . . And so it ran on, the ghastly cost of victory . . .

The general sighed and gripped his stomach suddenly with his hands, almost groaning aloud.

He had been on a powdered milk diet for nearly two months now, but it had not seemed to improve him, and every little while his heart would pound disagreeably and his neck muscles would grow

tight, seeming to constrict his whole body.

His once thick shock of hair had been falling out in bunches lately while his nostrils and eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

His once eager and youthful eyes were like holes burned in a blanket. His grim jaw sagged and drooped dispiritedly. He knew only too well that he was on the edge of a breakdown—why, the doctor had warned him that his arteries were hardening gradually and that another two weeks of strain would finish him.

Oh, well, let it come. He was tired. God he was tired . . .

With a mighty effort he turned his mind from such thoughts and called to the signaler.

"Dorkin—"

The man turned inquiringly.

"Dorkin—" there was a slight pause—"Dorkin, I, ah—" with a superhuman effort he roused himself—"Dorkin, notify the C.O. of the Second Pioneer Battalion that his outfit are to proceed into Fosse 8 on a burying party detail. Tell him to cover the ground thoroughly and make sure there are no wounded left in any of those holes. Examine all German dugouts to see there is no one buried alive and—and—stop at the engineers' dump to carry wire to the Front Line."

"Yes, sir."

The general tapped his fingers on the table absently for a second.

"And see if you can get that colonel of the Welsh Guards."

"Yes, sir."

The general slumped back in his chair and looked once more into space. There was no doubt about it, that stomach wouldn't stand much more. He felt his neck tenderly. What was it the doctor said he had? Angina pectoris—that was it. Angina pectoris . . . Well, it was comforting to know what he had. Again that slight smile. He wondered how it would look in the newspapers. The *Times* would solemnly announce that Brigadier General Holdron had died of heart failure.

EVERYBODY would laugh. The private soldiers would say—

"Yes, that potbellied old guts and gaiters with his yellow streak would make damn sure he wasn't killed in action."

An officer came in and clicked his heels. The general didn't like officers who clicked their heels. That always meant bad news. He looked up.

"Beg pardon, sir, Major Trivett of division staff—" It was accompanied by a smart salute that only a divisional staff officer could execute.

The dapper figure of the officer, with his youthful face, was a replica of the staff officer as the private soldier visualized him. The brigadier nodded without rising.

"What is it?" he inquired.

He wished he were a staff officer, just like this one—one of the serving maids instead of one of the served. You could have such a good time; no responsibility, nothing to worry about—no hundreds of dead men asking continually why they had died.

The staff officer was speaking rapidly.

"The divisional general wishes to give you his compliments, sir, and to state that the King has graciously consented to his pleading that you should be given some reward of merit for your distinguished services. To that end he entrusted me with this, sir—"

The general started into wakefulness as he surveyed a little silver bauble with its blue and white striped ribbon.

"What is it, Major?"

"The Distinguished Service Order, Sir. And if I may say so—"

The general stood up, and in a daze extended his hand.

"The Distinguished Service Order?" he said dully. "The Distinguished Service Order . . ."

"Yes, sir."

The medal was in his hand. What was it he had done to deserve this? Why, he had had men killed, that was it. He had had men killed—thousands of them, Germans

and British, friend and foe. It was he who just the day before yesterday had ordered this attack. He had done it before, often. It was silver, too. Who was it had taken silver? Why, Judas Iscariot, of course!

His wife had said in her last letter, rather peevishly, that everybody seemed to be getting decorated except him. Now here it was, a piece of silver . . .

Inwardly his mind was shrieking: "Get out! Damn you to hell, get out and take that thing with you. A medal! A medal —silver—Judas Iscariot! By God—"

The general fell back in his chair, unconscious. The signaler ran hastily over.

"It's the strain, sir," he explained to the astounded staff officer. "He hasn't had much sleep."

The staff officer's eyes blinked.

"By Jove, this is queer, very queer."

The signaler went to the door and one of the brigadier's own staff, Captain Hill, came in. A quiet chap; the brigadier's favorite. He looked at the general, the staff officer and the medal on the table.

"Division staff would make damned asses of themselves," he said aloud. He turned to the major. "Go back to your general and say nothing."

"But the medal?"

"Tell him the brigadier was pleased at the recognition thus bestowed on him and only hopes that he will be able to merit such a reward. Now get." The staff officer got.

Quietly the signaler and the captain worked over the slumped figure, that was panting for breath. A few minutes afterward a doctor appeared.

"Nerves all shot to hell. Full as a balloon with gas, and heart beating like a trip hammer. We'll have to recommend him for a rest."

Captain Hill nodded.

"A rest," he said quietly. "A rest! The brigadier, like all other brigadiers, will never be able to rest again."

"And why not?" said the doctor.

The captain smiled sardonically.

"Be a brigadier for a little while and you'll soon find out," he said cryptically, and gently touched the general's sagging head.

THE GUNS died down. The last shell winged its screaming way over the ghastly desolation of a land that groaned in travail.

For the piteous cries of wounded men lying in dark holes between the two forests seemed to come from the ground itself, and to give voice to a jagged and torn earth crying for relief from the incessant turmoil.

"A small local advance was achieved on the Ypres sector last night by the First Canadian Division.

"The line still held and the new territory was being consolidated as part of our line at 2 A.M.

"The German losses were terrific against the devastating machine gun fire of the Canadian machine gun units.

"No detailed list of our casualties is yet available to your correspondent, but he has it on good authority that they are comparatively light."

The general of the Canadian Corps turned to his aide as he read the dispatch and sighed with satisfaction.

"Well, that ought to show those damn politicians that we are on the job. Holdron has done it again. A good general is Holdron."

"A good general is Holdron," echoed the staff.

"A good general is Holdron," reechoed the war office in staid London.

"A good general is Holdron," echoed the politicians. "I wish we had more like him; he is like that American, Stonewall Jackson. If he sets out to get an advance, he gets it."

"A good general," echoes the French. And when you crossed the line to the German high command who were reading of the local defeat, they added to the general pæan of praise.

The colonel of the Fourth Canadian Battalion surveyed his casualty list with an impassive face and said—nothing.

Distracted sergeants and other officers hunted desperately in No Man's Land for

the wounded and dying, and crossed name after name from their rolls.

They also said nothing.

A certain Private Kildare of the brigade signal corps stood beside a row of bunks. He was looking at the still figure of a dead friend. And he was saying—nothing . . .

In the new Front Line, still only a string of shell holes, pioneer battalions were at work digging a trench that would connect the holes. Finding and identifying the dead and wounded, digging latrines, bomb stores and strong points.

This all had to be done before daylight, and in the space of a few hundred yards thousands of men were at work, each carrying on at his respective task.

It was pitch-dark, lighted only by occasional German flares. And it was here that the efficiency of the general reached its highest point. For long before the final German counter attack, special engineers had been sent out and had laid an exact plan of the digging to be done, laying out hundreds of yards of white tape that could be easily followed even in the dark. The wounded were being carefully but quickly evacuated. The brigadier had borrowed doctors from every available source and these were frantically at work easing pain.

The Prince of Wales had once watched one of this general's attacks and when asked what struck him most had answered—

"That never before had he seen a general who laid such careful plans for the assistance of the wounded."

It was a noted fact, and one often spoken of by doctors, that this general never left his wounded longer than humanly possible on the ground. But of course the higher command was not especially interested in this detail in 1916. There were lots of men available.

The arrangements for the relief of the brigade were working perfectly and already odd men were slowly but steadily moving toward the points where they were to reassemble.

But the ordinary soldier paid no attention to these fine points of generalship. All he knew was that whenever a dirty job was to be done it was his brigade that was called upon and he was sick of being the goat.

The relief signal corps passed down the steps of the dugout. They were cheerful and boisterous, having just finished a month's rest behind the lines.

The corporal who led the small column detailed to this point stopped suddenly when he reached the bottom, frozen momentarily into silence.

A man sat at a tiny table mechanically shuffling a deck of cards. Another stood as if made of stone, looking into a bunk containing a dead man. The operator of the field telephone sat staring unseeingly into the jungle of wires and plugs before him.

"Hey, you guys, come out of it," shouted the corporal.

All three wakened with a start and surveyed the newcomers. A slow grin stole over the face of the operator, and the man at the little table stood up and stretched himself.

"It's the relief!" he cried.

"The relief," echoed the operator.

But Kildare, after glancing in their direction for a moment, turned back toward the form in the bunk.

For the next few minutes there was a bedlam of sound as the operator gave the details of his post and the man at the table explained the positions of the various wires. As soon as he had given all the necessary information the operator went to Kildare and pulled at his shoulder gently.

"Come on, Kildare; pull out of it," he pleaded. "We can beat it, now."

Several members of the relief seized the stiff form of the man who had died in the dugout and lifted it out of the bunk.

Kildare started into wakefulness.

"What are you guys going to do?" he asked.

"Why, we're going to put the stiffs up in the trench where the burial party can get 'em."

They pulled the body out and carried it up the stairs.

Two more approached to follow out the same procedure with Kildare's chum but the boy's eyes showed that he had come to a swift decision. He bent down and hastily took up the body of his friend.

"Hey, Kildare, what's the idea?" expostulated the operator.

"The idea is that Jimmie is not going to be thrown in some damn shell hole, only to be blown to the top again."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean I'm going to take him back where he'll get a decent burial." Kildare started toward the stairs.

"But good Lord, man, you can't carry him all the way to Ypres."

"Can't I? There are two things I got to do. This is one of them; the other—"

"What's the other?"

"I got to find that general and tell the butcher what I think of him." And Kildare, sagging beneath the weight, stumbled toward the stairs and disappeared.

The operator turned to the surviving member of the little group.

"Well, Red, when Kildare makes up his mind it means there's no damn use arguin', so let's go. And believe me, I feel sorry for that general."

"So do I," agreed Red.

And, gathering up their equipment, they too disappeared up the stairs, leaving the relief to stare after them.

THE DOCTOR and the captain looked down at the general with beseeching faces.

"Look here, sir," remonstrated his aide, "you aren't in fit condition to do it. Good Lord, man, you have just recovered from an attack that would have killed an ordinary man."

"If you do, I wash my hands of it," chimed in the doctor. "Heavens above, sir, you have made every possible arrangement for your troops. They will get to their billets all right. There is nothing you can do—you admit that yourself."

The brigadier rose to his feet.

"Nevertheless, we are going," he said quietly, although his hands were visibly trembling. "I have always seen my men come in and I always will. Some of those artillerymen may try to steal their billets."

"Well, I can look after that," said his aide.

The general put on his cap.

"Let's be moving," he said shortly. "It's nearly daylight now and they should be out by Vlamertinghe by this time. Get the horses."

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"So be it, sir; but you do it on your own responsibility."

"Responsibility—responsibility! I wish to hell that the only thing I were responsible for were myself. Come on; let's get going."

A few minutes later the brigade and his chief-of-staff headed toward the Poperinghe road. It was dawn and in the woods and glens still untouched by the ravaging hand of war the song of awakening birds could be heard.

The line itself was deathly quiet, as the line generally is at dawn when both sides stand to the parapets, rifle in hand, like boys with chips on their shoulders daring the other to knock it off.

The general rode in silence, his greatcoat buttoned tightly to the throat and his figure slumped to such a degree that it seemed to be a part of the horse. As they drew closer to the road the general wakened long enough to take off the cap with its vivid red braid and replace it with an ordinary steel helmet.

Now he was indistinguishable from any other khaki clad figure. Long before he had removed the telltale red tabs on the shoulders of his greatcoat for just such occasions as these. For he knew only too well how the ordinary soldier loved the brass hat.

They were now close to the long straight road built by Napoleon for just such an exigency as the present one. The poplars on the edge had long before been broken by shell fire and made it impossible to proceed farther by horse. They dis-

mounted and, tying their horses to a fallen tree, went ahead on foot.

It was practically daylight now, and growing clearer every minute. Quite easily the general discerned the huge military cemetery that lay to his right on the fringe of the road. He had ordered several hundred graves to be dug in preparation for this event, and he sighed as he saw the mounds of new earth.

They arrived barely in time, for as they reached the edge of the wood they could see the first few figures of the relieved brigade marching out to their billets at Toronto Camp.

Down the road a little farther he discerned the band which would be playing lively airs to encourage them the last long mile. Still farther down the road would be the quartermasters of the various groups, and they would issue hot rum. At the camp itself cook kitchens with the first hot meal in days would be waiting to welcome them.

A good meal it would be. The general himself had supervised it. Fried Australian rabbit, mashed potatoes, pork and beans, a good heavy pudding, dates and hot tea, with a ration of cigarets.

He had even ordered that extra blankets be issued so that their first real sleep in days would be comfortable, and that the mail would be immediately given out, taking care not to call the names of the dead and wounded. And this was to be followed by still another ration of hot rum.

The divisional general had faithfully promised that his brigade would be given ten days of complete rest. And like an anxious mother he had personally organized concert parties, pay parades and everything that would help to relieve the monotony and keep their minds from— He turned to the captain.

"Listen, Hill, I think I will let you take the salute this morning. I will stay here."

"But, Brigadier—"

"You can go with the band."

"But I—"

"Will you go?"

"Yes, General."

The captain hastily departed and the brigadier stationed himself beside the tree.

THE GENERAL slumped, his whole body wilted against the trunk of a tree, while his mind seemed as misty as the half gloom around him.

Tramp, tramp, tramp—the steady, monotonous pounding of tired feet on the road. Rifles slung, heads down, shoulders bent, in silence—dead silence—they marched like some ghostly army. Once in awhile a pettish curse. Tired, oh, so tired, some even asleep as they marched.

The First Battalion. They had once been his boys, before he was promoted . . . He wished he were back again and he himself as colonel, fighting the brigadier and all higher up for the comfort of his men.

The band struck up far in the distance "O Canada, O Canada". Shoulders straightened. The steady tramp became more regular in its beat.

The band changed to the regimental march of the First. He himself had chosen that tune, an old favorite. "The Girl I Left Behind Me".

Too tired and weary to notice that lone figure at the tree, battalion after battalion trudged by.

Then came the Fourth. It had been the colonel of the Fourth who had given him hell only yesterday and said it was *his* responsibility.

Responsibility, responsibility—that was it; that was what made his stomach tight with gas and his heart pound, his temples throb, and kept him from sleeping. The Fourth Battalion passed and now came the odds and ends.

Machine gunners. He smiled as he heard one gunner shout—

"Well, thank the Lord the general got those blasted limbers to take our guns at Ypres."

He wanted to dart in among them and say, "Who said that—who said that?" and pat the man on the shoulder, give him medals and fawn upon him like a grateful puppy.

The machine gunners passed and last came a forlorn group of signalers.

Why, there were only eleven of them! There should be more signalers than that. Where were they? Surely they couldn't be— What was it the captain said? Oh, yes; that line he had had to run over the hill instead of around on account of exploding mines.

He wanted to run out and show the boys why it was necessary. Why he had the map right here. He could say:

"Look here, you chaps, here is the map; here is where the mines were exploded. That was why we had to run in that spare line, just in case—just in case— You understand don't you? Don't you understand?"

They would nod and smile. He was sure they would, but—it was the general's responsibility. He was a general—a brass hat.

He huddled against the tree as if for comfort.

He didn't know how long he stood there, but the band had stopped playing in the distance when he slowly stumbled back on to the road.

He heard some one coming along. It was a slow shuffle, as if the man were carrying some heavy burden.

He turned toward the road and saw a man bent double, staggering down the road as if drunken.

His eyes rose and he saw that the man was carrying a heavy burden—another man.

Somebody who could not stand the march, he thought. And, eager to assist, the general ran hastily toward the stumbling figure.

By Jove, that was grit; sheer grit!

"I'll help him," the general muttered. "I'll get my horse—the captain's horse, too, and let them ride in."

He was close to the staggering figure now and noticed with pity that the man had turned in toward the cemetery as if he had lost his way.

"Can I help?"

Private Kildare of the Signal Corps slowly and gently lowered his burden to the ground, too weary to notice who or what had asked the question, but grateful that it had been asked.

"Yes, you can. If you please you can help me put him in a grave."

"A grave? Good God, is he dead?"

"He has been dead since last night," said Kildare wearily.

"But—but—"

"You see, he was my buddy, so I wanted to see he gets decently buried."

"Oh—"

"Will you help me? It will only take a minute and you see I am—I am kind of tired."

Without another word the general took hold of the body and carried it toward an open grave.

Kildare followed, staggering with fatigue. The general jumped into the open hole, taking with him a blanket that was placed beside it.

"Hand him down."

Kildare dragged the body of Jimmie to the side and carefully the general laid the body down, covering it with the blanket.

He climbed up and found a spade, and while Kildare sat on the ground swaying with dizziness the general filled the grave.

It was over, and Private Kildare, still shaking with fatigue, stood up.

"Thanks—thanks—" he muttered, and would have fallen if the general had not caught him and held him upright.

"Come on, old man, buck up," said the general huskily. "We all have to take it."

"Yes, we all got to take it except the ruddy brass hats."

"The brass hats?" said the general feebly.

"Yeah, the brass hats—our brigadier in particular, the swine! He killed Jimmie."

"No!"

"Yes, and by God, some day we'll meet!" Kildare broke himself loose and, forgetting his weariness in his hate, said, "Some day we'll meet and, if we do—if we do—!"

Without another word he turned out on to the road and marched along it toward the camp.

The general watched him go with unseeing eyes.

THE NEW draft had arrived; they stood outside brigade H.Q. at ease, awaiting the brigadier's inspection.

It was a duty like this that the general hated above all the other detestable jobs which comprised his work. Nearly three thousand men, and every one of them to fill a vacancy that the general was responsible for creating. Enough men to populate a small town; enough men to run a huge factory; enough men to—

"But this way madness lies," thought the general as he gazed abstractedly at the table in front of him.

He hated to go out. He hated facing that group of young, smiling countenances, eager boys, most of them, and saying—

"Men, I am glad to welcome you to my brigade, and I hope that each one of you will live up to the glorious traditions that those men who have gone before have created . . ."

His gaze wandered restlessly and caught the glint of silver. He pulled out the half open drawer beside him and surveyed the contents.

His medal—the medal for Distinguished Service—lay in front of him, shining like some evil omen. He had intended sending it home to his wife, but—well, he just hadn't.

His mind traveled from the medal to the lone figure of the signaler who had cursed him. Gladly, willingly, he would have exchanged that medal and a dozen others like it, for just one comradely smile from that signaler. One smile that would say, "I understand, old man; I understand."

He closed the drawer with a bang and lifted himself to his feet.

It was five days now since he had seen him. He wondered dumbly if he would ever meet him again. He hoped not.

He went outside and inspected the draft. The operator at the telephone plainly heard his voice.

"Men, I am glad to welcome you to my brigade, and I hope . . ."

The signaler grinned.

"The same old hooey," he muttered, and viciously inserted a plug.

That night, after the various drafts had been allocated and the general had finished his evening meal of powdered milk, a sudden burst of heavy gunfire up the line betokened that the Germans had begun another of their counter attacks to regain the hill that his brigade had captured.

He dreaded the idea that the Third Division, who were holding the line, might be broken and a general alarm sent out.

He hastened to his office and sought out the operator.

"Get me the corps—"

He stopped in amazement, his eyes staring in perplexity at a newcomer at his telephone.

For a full half minute their gaze held. The general recovered himself and laughed a little shrilly.

"I didn't know we had changed our operators," he said.

The man stood up and saluted punctiliously.

"I beg to report, sir, that I was transferred this evening."

The general remembered now. He had issued orders that all brigade staff who were fit were to return to their units, replaced by men who were beginning to show signs of strain.

"Oh, yes, I remember now," he said aloud. "Your name—"

"Kildare, sir, Private 87452."

"Glad to see you on the staff, Kildare. Very glad indeed," said the general mechanically. "Give you a little rest."

"Yes, sir."

Kildare's face showed no signs of elation or gratitude. Only a strange impassivity. His eyes alone betrayed—

"Contempt," the general thought. "Contempt."

Aloud he said—

"Yes, yes; now will you get the corps commander for me?"

"Yes, sir." Still that contemptuous politeness.

The general sat back at his desk. He noticed that the gunfire had increased and seemed to be closer. But his mind was not occupied with it.

This man hated him, just as all the survivors of the last fight would hate him. Why, the man had sworn he would get him. Get *him*, the general!

He had better be transferred back. Better still, send him to England on leave. Maybe he would feel better when he came back, maybe even grateful.

If only the young fool would think he would see it wasn't the general's fault. Why, by Jove, he could explain to him right now about that line run over the the ridge. Here were the maps right before him.

"The corps commander is on the line, sir."

"Very well, Kildare; thanks."

He picked up the phone. He had forgotten what he wanted to talk to him about. The steady, terrific pounding of the guns brought it back to his mind with a start and once more he became a general.

"Hello, is that you, Lucien? What's doing up the line?"

The voice at the other end came thin and indistinctly.

"Jerries attacked on two divisional fronts."

"No!"

"Yes, and it looks bad. We might have to issue a general alarm. You will hear from your division. Better stay at the phone."

"All right." The general hung up the receiver.

A general alarm . . . Good Lord, it must be bad!

With the ear of an expert he listened to the symphony of the guns. There was no doubt about it; the Germans were certainly giving hell. The Canadian gunfire seemed to be dying down.

His chief of staff came in. He looked anxious.

"By Jove, sir, I have just seen a captain of the field artillery. He says Jerry has broken through."

So that was the reason for the slackening of Canadian gunfire. The artillery was falling back.

The general forgot about medals and the soldiers who hated him. Forgot everything except that he was a brigadier and that soon—

"Every man up!" he barked. "Have all the staff assembled immediately."

The chief disappeared. The general turned to the operator.

"Get me the four battalion commanders at once, and the C.O's of the machine guns and trench mortars." The staff trooped in and he yelled to a stenographer, "Get this!" The typist hurried to his desk.

"To all officers in charge of units: Have every officer including yourself stand to immediately in field equipment. Please don't disturb ordinary ranks until further notice. G. O. C."

DISPATCH riders appeared, hastily took the messages and dashed out again.

"You're wanted, sir," the operator said. "Division calling."

"All right."

The general took up the field phone and listened intently, grunting at intervals.

The guns suddenly died away, and then burst once more into a torrent of fire.

The chief of staff looked knowingly at his aides.

"That means Fritzie got through," he said. "They have advanced their range."

Kildare was human and, like any other field telephone operator, he could not resist the golden opportunity to listen in. He heard the division commander rapidly issuing orders for a general alarm, and where the division was to assemble.

"Every man up—" he was saying.

Every man up!

Suddenly Private Kildare visualized that huge draft of fresh, grinning youths

that had arrived only that afternoon. Why it would be suicide—sheer suicide to send them in! They knew nothing, nothing; absolutely nothing.

"Every man up—" he laughed sardonically. "That meant every man except the brass hats that had allowed such a thing to happen."

"Every man up!" echoed the brigadier. "I'll have every man up."

"Yes, every man except yourself, you swine," said Kildare softly.

The brigadier hung up and looked thoughtfully into space. The Germans had broken through; there was no doubt of the seriousness of it. In two hours they had advanced to the support lines and already patrols were seen outside the town of Ypres.

Every man up— Like a flash it dawned on the brigadier what that meant. Why, it would be a massacre! These recruits—they knew nothing about defending themselves. They could only go and die. The general looked into space.

"What's the matter, sir?" broke in the chief of staff. "Is Jerry through?"

"Yes, Jerry's through. The First and Second Divisions are wiped off the map, and our division must proceed to Ypres in battalion order, deploy outside the Menin gate, and—and—"

"And what, sir?"

The general looked at his chief of staff queerly.

"Why, die, I suppose; just die."

"Is it that bad, sir?"

The general shook himself.

"Yes. Send out the 'assembly'."

The general called to the operator:

"And send to all commanders that they are to proceed to the outskirts of Theinevorade where I will meet them. Battle equipment and every man up."

"Every man up," echoed Kildare mechanically.

"Every man up," called the chief of staff to the disappearing runners.

So perfect were the details for just such an occasion as this that now there was nothing to do but wait. Wait half an hour until the brigade was assembled and then move toward the Line.

"Every man up," thought Private Kildare, and looked over at the stolid face of the general. "It doesn't worry him if they *are* just recruits. *He* doesn't have to die."

The general started to clear the maps from his table preparatory to moving. Already the signal section were planning out the next brigade headquarters and a new system of lines to meet the emergency. The gunfire had reached its peak and now the vicious rattle of machine guns could be heard in the distance.

The brigadier opened the drawers of his desk in search of some papers. The medal shone wickedly in the light of the lantern. He picked it up musingly, and once more like a distant refrain he heard division commander say, "Every man up."

It had been just such an emergency as this that had gained him the D.S.O. But the last time he had had seasoned troops.

Seasoned troops—and now a bunch of recruits who would walk blindly into the German machine gun fire and—just die. He would, of course, come out. Generals never got killed. Why, he even hadn't fired a shot yet.

He hadn't fire a shot! Two thousand seasoned troops were far better than those rookies . . .

His eyes caught the figure of the operator. This man hated him; the whole brigade hated him, called him a butcher. His was the responsibility, just as it was tonight. He would be responsible for the death of all those recruits who didn't know how to take care of themselves.

Two thousand men. The brigade roll lay on the table before him. Why, the new draft hadn't been put on the roll, yet!

His eye moved to the bottom of the roll.

"Total strength including all arms, two thousand and fourteen."

Why, that included even himself; it included the cooks, batmen; it included everything except the new draft!

For the first time in weeks the general laughed aloud.

And, Kildare heard the laugh, and his face flamed with passion.

MASSES of men, horses, trucks and other vehicles, jammed the roads outside the little village of Theinevorade. The sky was lighted continually with the stabbing flare of exploding shells, and the new recruits huddled together like so many sheep, clinging to the few old soldiers among them like lambs to their mothers.

The brigadier arrived on the scene in his car, occupied also by his staff and the telephone operator. The headlights of the car threw into blinding relief the white, staring face of a man very evidently new to this dreadful game of war. The brigadier's eyes caught the forlorn figure and an idea that had been flickering in his mind became a set purpose.

He stepped out of the car to face a group of colonels and other senior officers of the various units. For a moment there was a silence, as the brigadier tried to frame his orders.

"Gentlemen," he said at last, "as you are probably aware, hell's broken loose up the Line and it is necessary for our division to act as a sacrifice until reenforcements arrive." He hesitated a moment and then went on, "There will be no further orders issued after this, so listen carefully."

He outlined the technical details of how the various units were to hold the line.

"Are you sure you understand everything?" he asked when he had finished.

A low murmur of voices answered him.

The C.O. of the Fourth Battalion advanced slightly ahead of the others.

"Pardon me, sir," he said haltingly, "but do you understand what these orders mean?"

"I do."

"Do you understand, sir, that half of my unit are new recruits?"

"I do, but—"

"By God, sir, you are practically sentencing them to death!"

There was a silence, and Private Kildare felt an impulse to go over and pat the colonel of the Fourth on the shoulder.

"Pardon me, Colonel—" the brigadier's voice came softly clear, and filled with deadly purpose. "You have not heard all the orders."

"Are there any more?" asked the colonel shortly.

"There are. The new draft which each unit received this afternoon is not yet on brigade, or I doubt even on battalion rolls. Is that not so?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Well, then, what business have you to assemble them?"

"What?"

"You heard me. I say that those men are not yet on the rolls, so that any orders issued would of course not apply to them."

"Do I understand—"

"You understand perfectly. Please send these men back to their billets."

"It is your responsibility, sir."

"Certainly it is mine—it always has been mine," answered the brigadier. "And remember that orders came from division for every man to be up."

"But surely you don't mean the cooks and the band?" remonstrated the commander of the Fourth.

"I said every man, and I mean every man—even to the colonels. It includes even myself."

"You, sir?"

"Yes; now get rid of these recruits and embark."

For a second there was a silence, and then the C.O. of the Fourth Battalion came forward and grasped the hand of the general.

And Private Kildare was smiling as he looked at his commanding officer.

Four days later, when the relief force counter-attacked, they found a high officer sharing in death a sodden shellhole with a lowly private. It was the brigadier. In the glowering dusk, Field Operator Kildare saw the detail carefully lift the muddied body, felt his eyes smart and a catch of pain in his throat. Unforgetably he knew he had misjudged a *man.*

THE RITUAL DRUMS

By T. SAMSON MILLER

BOOM—BOOM—BOOM!

The white man at the lonely trading station on the bank of the star mirroring water lane, walled in by dense, vast forests of mangrove and mahogany, shivers.

Boom—boom—boom!

The deep note booms on the breathless, brooding mystery of the tropic night like a tolling funeral bell. It comes from the *juju* grove in the hidden depths of the forest. It tells of ghastly rituals, of sacrifice and bloody orgies. Perhaps in the morning the white man will find that one of his blacks is missing. The black has been "called by *juju*"—called to answer for an offense against the gods or, on a trumped up charge, to provide the wizards with a victim. The white man shivers at atavistic memories of the drums of his druidical ancestors, the Great Drum of the Great Temple of the Aztecs. He shivers with atavistic fears.

Boom—boom—boom!

What is there in the beat of the drum that stirs us to the depths of our being?

"And they came to the Hill of the Drum. And some went mad, because of the booming of the drum in the night, and they fled screaming into the wastes."

Thus records Messer Marco Polo, and to one who has clapped his hands over his ears to shut out of his head the dreadful thunder of the ritual drums of the *juju* groves of the Niger, the madness is easily understood. If one possesses a gramophone one will hurry to clap on a record—preferably jazz. He seeks only to drown that awful drumming, and to rid his vision of a grotesque wizard beating a huge, hollow log, with goat skins stretched over the ends. They may be human skins taken from warriors who showed great prowess in battle, or men who were supposed to be possessed of god-like powers, or the skins of virgins.

The ritual drum is the primitive origin of the church organ, the primitive beginning of music in religion. The guttural chant of the *juju* grove—a natural cathedral in the forest with columnar mahoganies and tree canopied aisles—is the origin of the chanted liturgies of our own cathedrals. These ritual drums are kept from the prying eyes of whites. They have a warrior guard, and even as the knight of old kept vigil all the long night over the cathedral altar, ready to do battle with devils and flame breathing monsters, so does the African guard the *juju* altar and the ritual drums.

Boom—boom—boom!

The lonely white trader claps his hands over his ears. The missionary laments his helplessness. The district commissioner tries to persuade himself that there is nothing happening. He would like to clean out the whole works, but he knows that the secret path to the *juju* grove is beset with treacherous pits with poisoned stakes, suspended spears, hornets' nests, big stones lodged in trees and connected with concealed tripping strings.

He knows, too, that his few police would be overwhelmed. If he gets aid and penetrates to the grove and destroys it, another will appear in a different place. If he inquires into the disappearance of this or that black he will meet with lies, evasions, or stubborn, closed mouths.

A Story of India and the Press

FLASHLIGHT

By L. G. BLOCHMAN

THREE signs indicated to Calcutta the approach of that season called, for relative reasons only, "the cold weather." First, the thermometer dipped slightly below seventy at night; second, the green flies appeared in annoying clouds; and third, the visit of the viceroy was announced.

Ever since the capital of India was removed to Delhi, the viceroy makes annual cold weather pilgrimages to Calcutta, to assure Calcuttans that their city is still the first in India and the second in the empire. He also engages in such important public functions as congratulating the winner of the Tollygunge Open Golf Tourney. It was an assignment to photograph his Excellency on the golf course which headed Harry Cort, American cameraman stranded in India, into the most anxious thirty-six hours of his adventurous career.

Soon after the crack of dawn—all ceremonies in India begin before seven in the morning to cheat the sun—the streets leading to the golf club were cleared. Viceregal bodyguards lined the route, a gorgeous spectacle in their red coats and blue and gold *pugarees*, red and white pennants flying from the tips of their lances, and the yellow morning light gleaming on their high boots. They were fine, husky Indians from the northern states, and much more gorgeous to look upon than the viceroy himself, who, after all, was just another Britisher in striped trousers, frock coat and white topee. However, the usual crowds formed, and people hung out of windows waiting to see the viceroy pass.

After an expectant delay, the sound of a motor was heard, and necks craned curiously. Then spectators were rewarded, not by a glimpse of the king-emperor's personal representative, but by the spectacle of Harry Cort, undersized, wiry limbed American press photographer, passing noisily between the surprised and resplendent lines of the viceregal guards, reclining regally in the back seat of a rattling flivver grown old in the editorial service of the Calcutta *Diplomat*. The angle at which his topee was pushed back from his forehead, disclosing a disorderly lock of jute colored hair, gave his slightly freckled face an air of humorous impertinence. A reckless gleam in his gray eyes and the firm pressure of determined lips upon a handmade cigaret contradicted any complete impression of levity, however.

In the front seat of the same rickety vehicle, beside the brown, barefoot syce, sat Jaganath Mullick, the Bengali *babu* who served Cort as understudy and assistant. The double chinned Mullick sat proudly with his stubby fingers clasped on his rotund stomach, his shaven head bare. Stacked about his feet and entangled in the folds of his white *dhoti* were a black cotton umbrella which served as a sunshade; tripods; extra plate holders; a flashlight gun for emergency exposures; and various other photographic sundries. Mullick could usually be depended upon to forget something essential, just as he could be depended upon not to forget his own camera—a cheap, box Brownie affair which he always apologetically insisted belonged to his young son. However, as the son was not quite a year old, Cort rightly surmised that Mullick was merely aping his boss in the business of learning to be a press photographer.

As long as the *babu* kept the plate holders loaded and didn't forget to put ice in the developer, Cort was tolerant of his playing photographer. Even when luck or increasing skill enabled the Bengali to make a good print of his own, Cort never looked upon his activities as more than play; he had been in India just long enough to acquire the usual white distrust of all native workmanship.

The arrival of the press flivver at the Tollygunge Golf Club was not nearly so auspicious as the ride through the guards. As the car rattled by a veranda full of officials, Captain Reginald Beeker stepped indignantly on the running board. Captain Beeker, military secretary to the governor of Bengal, was fussy and furious. Many times before he had been irritated by Harry Cort's lack of awe before the splendor of the British *raj* as exemplified by the trappings surrounding Bengal Government House. And now with the viceroy on his annual visit to the presidency, Captain Beeker felt personally responsible for perfect performance of everything in Bengal, down to the prompt rising and setting of the sun. The behavior of the American photographer was nothing short of public scandal.

"You can't do this sort of thing!" declared Captain Beeker, seizing Cort's arm as the American was preparing to get out of the car.

"Sure I can," replied Cort breezily.

"Not again," snapped Captain Beeker, motioning to three subalterns to help push Cort back into the flivver. "Drive him away," he directed, as one officer took the wheel. "He's not to come back while his Excellency is here. Furthermore—" this was a parting shot at Cort—"you'll

never be allowed inside Government House grounds again."

"Amen!" sang out Cort, as his military escort bore him away.

Cort usually thrived on efforts of others to thwart him. He was used to having camera shy but news worthy subjects block his efforts. He had carted a press graflex all over America for nearly fifteen years and had rarely come in empty handed. He had pushed his way past "no" men to make thousands of exclusive news pictures. He had sneaked a camera into the death house to photograph an execution. He had barely escaped with his life when a press plane he had chartered fell in flames. He had been pushed off the rail of a liner into New York harbor by a European celebrity who objected to photographers. He had done funerals of presidents and weddings of princes. He had faked pictures of crimes and posed chorus girls with crossed legs.

Then he had conceived the idea of owning a picture agency of his own. With a laboratory man named Spencer, he founded the firm of Cort & Spencer, "The Camera Men who Cover the World".

To make good the slogan, Cort started around the world to build up a library of foreign negatives and arrange for correspondents in fifty countries. It looked big until Cort got to India. He had apparently lost contact with his mailing addresses, and had missed several drafts from the home office. After living on credit for a month in Calcutta, he cabled for money. The cable that came back announced that his partner Spencer, together with the Cort & Spencer treasury, had disappeared. When he found out he was a financial orphan, with a stack of debts, he did the only thing he could decently do: He settled down in Calcutta to work until he could pay what he owed and buy his passage home.

He had held a job as staff photographer for the *Diplomat* by his audacity and efficiency, and despite J. Harte Simpson, the news editor. Simpson hated most of mankind. A newspaper man who rode to work in an expensive car with a footman —Simpson was supposed to be some sort of remittance man—had no trouble at all in being imperiously disagreeable. And although the morning's rebuff on the viceroy picture was only Cort's second failure in Calcutta, it happened to be his second in two days. Cort knew Simpson would make capital of the fact, and he was not disappointed.

"No more dependable than a *babu!*" exclaimed Simpson. His thin face was pale and old beyond his apparent thirty years. He had a trick of talking without opening his mouth.

Cort did not reply at once. He set down his bulky camera, took a hitch in his white trousers, and leisurely watched a barefoot office boy with white mustache and white turban lay a sheaf of proofs on Simpson's desk.

"No damage done," said Cort at last. "You can't fill the whole paper with the viceroy, and I'll get him at the Government House party tonight."

"Oh, you will?"

"Yeah, I'll make a flashlight."

"It happens," said Simpson, smiling sarcastically as he fingered a sheet of note paper, "that I've just been notified that you'll no longer be admitted to Government House. A *chaprassi* brought an official chit to that effect not ten minutes ago."

"That don't mean anything," said Cort. "I'll get the picture anyhow."

"As you got the photo of Mr. Franklin Jones yesterday?"

Cort grinned.

"Didn't I bring you a shot of Jones?"

"A photo of a man getting out of his bath backwards!" snorted Simpson. "What do you expect me to do with a picture like that?"

"I had to take it through a window," said Cort. "This Jones guy is harder to see than the Pope. I don't see what you're so damned anxious to mug him for. He doesn't look important."

"Let me judge his importance. It happens I want his picture."

"No American detective is that important."

"Detective?" Simpson carefully placed a slug of type metal on the proof sheets which were fluttering faintly in the tepid breeze stirred up by the electric *punkah* overhead. Then he stared at Cort. "Who told you he was a detective?"

"Barroom rumors," said Cort. "Just gossip."

Simpson drummed abstractedly on the desk top.

"Forget about Jones," he said. "Get the viceroy—if you can. I doubt if you'll make it."

Simpson's superior smile returned. Cort turned his back on it and sauntered downstairs to his darkroom. He wanted to coach Jaganath Mullick in the details of his plan to crash the gate at Government House.

IT WAS after ten that night when Harry Cort put his plan into operation. Gaining entrance was easy enough. He knew most of the Government House *durwans* and had distributed enough cigarets among them at one time or another to be able to place a rupee where it would do the most good. The trick of the evening consisted in staying out of sight of Captain Reginald Beeker, who, Cort decided, would be with the guests in the expansive gardens back of the mansion.

Cort slipped under the broad front stairs of the mansion and followed a corridor that led to a series of offices in the rear, on the ground floor. He found the office he sought—a long, narrow room with desks for a secretary of some kind, two assistant secretaries, and several secretaries to assistant secretaries. The room was unoccupied. Across the far end was a triple window, looking out upon the lawns and shrubberies of the governor's garden.

Cort quietly pushed open the center pane of the window, and quickly set up his camera. Everything was working out according to schedule. The window commanded the strip of red cloth laid across the lawn, and on which the governor and the viceroy, with their wives and staffs, would make a formal entrance. All Cort had to do was focus, open his shutter, and wait. He had sent Jaganath Mullick into the grounds by another entrance, to crawl through the shrubbery with a flashlight gun. When the viceroy arrived, Mullick would set off the flash, thus illuminating the scene and exposing the plate in Cort's waiting camera. Since the location of the flash would give no clue to Cort's whereabouts, his escape with the picture would be simplified.

From his vantage point Cort watched the long tunics and big turbans of servants circulating among the crowds on the lawn, bearing trays of glasses and bottles. He heard music somewhere. He made out familiar faces among the men in bob-tailed white coats and black trousers—the evening dress of the Oriental tropics. He recognized Zoros, the Soviet trade commissioner, who seemed to be contemptuously happy over being the only guest not in evening clothes. A small, slightly hunched figure in wrinkled whites, Zoroff stopped to talk for a few furtive moments with Graf von Sturm, monocled German vice-consul. Captain Beeker flitted across the scene, important, imperious, stopping for a curt nod and a phrase with Derain, a rich Frenchman from Pondicherry.

Cort muttered to himself as he saw Simpson, his news editor, make a nervously dapper entry. Simpson always went to Government House affairs "to make a killing among the wives of bureaucracy", as he frequently boasted. He appeared to be looking for some one. He snatched a drink from the tray of every bearer he passed.

After him Cort saw Franklin Jones, the latest addition to the American colony, whom he had photographed in his bath. Even had he not recognized him fully dressed, Cort would have known him for a recent arrival in Calcutta. Jones wore an all black dinner jacket and, despite the technical beginning of the "cold weather," was perspiring profusely in its temperate zone warmth. He was in earnest conversation with the Rajah of Gaepore, a gor-

geous, fiercely bearded prince who looked constantly and cautiously about him, nodding occasionally to make the jeweled pendant at the front of his turban swing and sparkle. Jones and the rajah walked rapidly away, disappearing in the crowd that moved and shifted.

A stupid assignment, Cort thought. A stupid picture, but one he would get for the sole reason that people had said he could not. Jaganath Mullick ought to be in position by now . . .

Suddenly Harry Cort's scalp tingled. He heard the click of a lock, turned and saw a glimmer of light as the door to the office opened and closed. He stood tense, listening.

There were men standing in the dark at the opposite end of the room—two men, evidently. One man spoke in a low murmur that reached Cort's ears as a blur. The other spoke quietly but distinctly and was obviously an American.

"I haven't got it with me," the American voice was saying. "I told you I'd bring it tomorrow night. You've sent out a call to have all the boys there, haven't you?"

A mumble came from the second man.

"Midnight, sure," said the American voice. "How do you get to this Munshi Amir's bazar, anyhow?"

Another murmur.

"No, honestly, I haven't—"

The American voice broke off. There was a grunt, two thuds, the scuffle of feet.

Cort heard panting, the sounds of men grappling, coming nearer. A chair was overturned near him. He could make out shadows whirling, wrestling, felt the warmish air fanned by struggling bodies. He flattened himself in his corner, fascinated by this battle between two unseen combatants.

The sounds of fighting ended as suddenly as they had begun. There was a groan. Feet moved quickly across the floor. The door opened and closed. The lock clicked. Silence flowed through the darkness.

Harry Cort remained motionless for a long minute, uncertain, puzzled by the predicament into which he had been thrust. He was trying to orient himself. He was under the impression that only one man had left the room. Yet if the other were still present, he gave no sign of life. Cort strained his ears.

At the end of a minute he became aware of a faint sound—a soft, rhythmic tattoo, like the drip of rain off the eaves. The sound was insistent, originating somewhere near the center of the room. Cort took a few steps in the darkness, then stopped to listen again.

The dripping continued with ominous monotony. He moved again. The drops seemed to fall at his feet.

Crouching slightly so that his body would form a screen between his hands and the window, Cort struck a match. Almost before the yellow bud of fire had blossomed into a flare, he had pinched it out with his fingers. He had seen enough.

The brief glow had revealed a man stretched awkwardly across a desk, arms and legs sprawling, wide eyes staring at the ceiling. A knife pierced a red splotch in a starched shirt. Blood was dripping over the edge of the desk.

The man wore a black dinner jacket. He was the enigmatic person Calcutta had known for several days only as Franklin Jones.

Harry Cort stretched out his hand in the dark, grasped an inert arm. He found the wrist. The flesh was warm. His fingers sought the pulse. There was none.

FOR THE FIRST time in his career Cort forgot a picture assignment. A dead man was no novelty to him. He had rubbed elbows with death many times in his life, always with perfect equanimity. Yet this corpse sharing the same circumscribed darkness seemed to exude a strange, indefinable horror, to cast a spell of impotence over Cort. A spasm of panic passed through him. He wanted to run. Then he took control of himself and remembered his camera.

Quickly he dismantled the tripod, slipped his graflex into its case and slung the strap across his shoulder. Cautiously he picked his way to the opposite end of the office, turned the door knob slowly, pulled. The door did not give. He turned the knob the other way. Still no result. The door held fast. The murderer had locked his victim in—and Harry Cort with him.

The drip of blood continued.

Cort turned and almost ran back to the windows. He opened the center pane a little wider and leaned out. It was only a few feet to the ground. The window was in a shadow, fortunately. He'd slip out that way. He'd have a hard time explaining how he came to be locked up with a corpse, particularly as Beeker had barred him from Government House.

He threw one leg over the window sill —then blinked.

A great sheet of luminosity blinded him. The viceroy was arriving and Jaganath Mullick had fired the flash as he had been instructed. But instead of the flare revealing the viceroy to Cort's lens, it exhibited to the waiting guests the spectacle of Harry Cort making an unceremonious exit from a Government House window.

After a stunned second, Cort saw through the veil the flash had thrown before his eyes. He saw faces again—the Rajah of Gaepore's beard, Graf von Sturm adjusting his monocle, Simpson hurrying feverishly through the crowd. But in all the confused impression, one face stood out: that of Captain Reginald Beeker, scowling in amazement under his diminutive mustache.

Cort jumped and ran. He did not look again at the military secretary. He did not have to look to know that the fussy little Beeker was already bustling officiously about, giving orders for Cort's seizure. Cort saw complications piling up. He waited for no forcible ejection.

He found himself outside the grounds, walking rapidly down Old Court House Street. A motor car drove past him, slowed down as though waiting for him to catch up, then sped on again.

Cort quickened his step to a near run. His camera case banged against his hip in annoying rhythm with his stride. He swore. He was not running away. He merely wanted to think, and the only place he knew possessed the proper solitude and quiet was his darkroom in the *Diplomat* office.

He turned at the *Diplomat* gate, crossed the compound, rushed past the dozing *jamadar*. As he slammed the door of his darkroom behind him, he breathed a sigh of relief. This was familiar darkness, a warm darkness that smelled pleasantly of hypo and developer and drying plates. To most people these chemical odors would have been unpleasant, but to Cort, sweat soaked and jumpy, they were a soothing, friendly fragrance.

He stood for a moment getting his breath, telling himself not to be a damned fool. What had he to be nervous about? He had nothing to do with the killing of Franklin Jones. As a matter of fact, he did not even know who had killed him—or why. He groped along the wall, felt for the switch and snapped on the red light. He liked the calm dimness of the ruby working lamp . . .

The liquids in the shallow developing trays turned to blood as the red light suffused itself through the darkness. Cort took a surprised step backward. The ruddy rays fell full upon a face—an Oriental face, a somber mask, cruel in its stolidity. The face seemed to be detached, floating in the dark, as it rose from the shadows to catch the glow of the red lamp.

"*Chel ao!*" ordered Cort after the first impact of astonishment. "Nobody's allowed in here."

The face remained motionless a moment before the lips formed perfect English words—

"I want the plates you exposed tonight."

"Who the hell are you?" demanded Cort.

"Give me the plates—all you have

taken today. Better give them peacefully."

Cort stared. The Indian was tall and gave an impression of power despite strangely hunched shoulders. He moved toward Cort with a peculiar, twisting walk. For a second Cort's memory dropped back to the motor car that had slowed up in Old Court House Street. Had the murderer seen Cort climbing out the window of the death room, and sent his man to destroy possible photographic evidence against him? Or was this man the murderer?

"Who sent you here?" Cort asked.

"I can offer you five thousand rupees for all the plates you exposed today." A roll of bills flashed in the dim light.

"Put your money away," said Cort.

"Ten thousand is the outside limit. I warn you not to bargain for more. Sell?"

"No!" said Cort without hesitation. "Not for ten *lakhs*. Who—"

Cort's words were cut short by a blow to the mouth. He fell back against his work bench. The shock upset a plate rack. A dozen negatives fell with a ringing clatter of broken glass. Cort struck back. His fist thudded into flesh. There was a grunt.

The Indian vanished in the shadows for a second, then leaped grotesquely to the work bench. He began pulling down boxes, kicking over trays, smashing bottles. Cort grabbed his leg. The fixing bath upset.

The invader sprang, caught Cort around the neck, and clutched at the camera case still hanging over the photographer's shoulder. Cort tore him loose. Again he sprang, this time swinging on the strap, yanking, twisting. A knee caught Cort in the groin. He winced. In that instant the case was borne to the floor. There was a crash of glass.

"Right on the plate holder," Cort muttered, leaping to retrieve his camera. As he grasped a remnant of the shoulder strap, the door opened and the intruder disappeared. He was satisfied with his wrecking activities.

CORT made no effort to give chase. With great tenderness, he was examining his camera. Like a nurse with an injured child, he went over the box, opened and closed the diaphragm, peered at the lens, tried the mirror release, felt the ground glass focusing screen. Finally he removed the magazine plate holder from the back. He could feel the broken glass move under his fingers. The plates were wrecked, all right. Lucky there weren't any pictures there anyway. He wound up the focal plane shutter and watched the metal bound slits zip past as he released them one by one. The shutter still worked. All in all, the only damage was to the plates. Lucky . . .

Again the door burst open. Jaganath Mullick stood gesticulating with a flashlight gun, his eyes wide with excitement.

"Quick!" breathed the panting *babu*. "By backside door, please. No time for wasting."

"What's the idea?" demanded Cort.

"Quick!" repeated the *babu*. "Police just now coming. Two inspector sahibs. one constable and three *pahare-wallas*, all expectant over arrest of Mister Cort for murdering of Mister Jones."

"Me? Why should I run? I didn't kill anybody."

"All substantial evidence pointing your side. Witnesses seeing you exuding from murdering room by window will swear same. Door locked thus delaying crime discovery. But perhaps you know who are actual genuine assassins?"

"Nope," said Cort. "I don't."

"Then by all means quicken your steps," said the *babu*. "*Ghari* is awaiting as aforementioned at backside door. Quick!"

Cort hesitated a brief moment. Then he followed the rotund Bengali. After all, he might as well think over things tonight and decide what he wanted to do in the morning. If he were taken by the police now, he wouldn't have an alibi in the world to offer. Why not disappear for the night and work up his case, if possible?

The *ghari* Jaganath Mullick had procured was a closed vehicle. The *ghari-walla* was nonchalantly feeding hay to his bony horse. Mullick pushed him back into his seat as Cort was climbing inside. The cab jogged down the street, through Bow Bazar, then Mirzapur Street. As they turned into Amber Street, the horse slowed down. Jaganath Mullick poked his head out and saw the white uniform of a policeman standing in the middle of the road. He quickly withdrew his head and knocked against the roof of the cab.

"Do not stop for *pahare-walla*," he said as loudly as he dared. But the vehicle had stopped.

The brown policeman touched his red turban and inquired what time it was. The *ghari-walla* didn't know. The policeman put one foot on the step and wondered if the passengers inside might not know the time. The driver said he thought they might.

"Ten minutes to one," shouted Jaganath Mullick in an alarmed tenor.

The *ghari* started again, rattled down dark streets past the leper asylum, wound into narrow ways lined with mud huts whose bamboo frames bulged under the weight of their tile roofs. After an apparently aimless ride down one alley and up another, the *babu* dismissed the *ghari*. "He will never remember where he has brought us," said Jaganath Mullick. "And in addition my aunt lives at slight distance from this place."

The aunt's domicile which was to serve as temporary hiding place for Cort was hidden behind a collection of huts at the end of a crooked lane. It consisted of one room, already occupied by an asthmatic, toothless old woman, a hump backed bull, household utensils of brass and earthenware, seven hundred mosquitoes and sundry lesser insects. After spending the rest of the night there, lying sleepless on the swept mud floor, listening to the sonorous breathing of the old woman and the bull, inhaling warm odors of *ghee*, coconut oil and bovine vapors, Cort knew he wanted to return to his office in the morning, risk false arrest, and explain everything the best he could. He would wait, however, until the arrival of Jaganath Mullick. The *babu* had promised to appear early in the morning with news, and food designed for Occidental stomachs.

Mullick came soon after his aunt and the bull were up. He was still pop eyed. He handed Cort a sandwich with one hand and a newspaper with the other.

Well, there he was. Even the sedate, leisurely British headline style of the *Diplomat* managed to convey an undercurrent of sensation in the murder of Franklin Jones. The most scandalous part of the business was that it had occurred at Government House, practically in the presence of the viceroy:

REGRETTABLE INCIDENT
AT SOIREE

Crime at Government House

VICEROY'S VISIT MARRED

Photographer Suspected of
Murdering American

The suspect, of course, was Harry Cort. Circumstantial evidence was pretty strong. Furthermore, the newspaper account declared that Cort was not only a murderer, but also head of a huge dope smuggling ring. The American consulate-general had revealed the existence of an international organization that annually smuggled millions of dollars worth of Indian opium and its derivative morphine into the United States.

The late Franklin Jones had appeared at the American consulate with United States Government credentials, announced that he was fast unearthing the Indian sources of the illicit narcotics trade, and was soon to cooperate with Calcutta police in killing the business at its roots, the press was informed

Instead, he had been killed by one of the dope gang who recognized him as a detective, and who also stole the man's credentials and identity papers.

CORT, the newspaper said, had been posing as a photographer merely to mask his smuggling activities. He had disappeared after the killing, first wrecking his darkroom which was believed to contain damaging evidence!

"That settles it," mumbled Cort, wolfing his sandwich. "I'm going down and have it out."

"But the police, sir?"

"I'll take a chance. Hell, I'm not guilty of anything."

Jaganath Mullick waggled his head and executed several contortions of his fat shoulders to indicate resigned incomprehension of the American's reasoning.

"How about cigarets?" asked Cort, licking the crumbs from his fingers.

"Ah, quite so," said the *babu*, fishing in the pocket of the European style coat he affected while on assignment with Cort. "I have purchased one tin of Panchpachpan, which I—"

Jaganath Mullick stopped abruptly and stared at his hand. His chubby fingers clasped a crumpled envelop against the yellow cylinder of the cigaret tin. With his left hand he reached over and extracted the paper, turned it over, while the puzzled expression about his eyes grew. He handed it to Cort.

"This must be for you," he said.

The envelop bore Cort's name, but no address.

"Where did you get this?" Cort demanded.

"Regretfully can not say."

"I suppose it grew in your pocket—like the mango trick."

"Conceivably," said the *babu*.

Cort ripped open the envelop. His eyebrows moved together a fraction of an inch as he read. He snorted and pushed the paper under the eyes of Jaganath Mullick who, in an awed voice, spelled out:

> "You are dead wrong in holding out for more money. You were offered the limit last night and you refused. You are dead right in keeping under cover. It is the healthiest thing to do. A sea voyage would be even healthier. We will furnish you the ticket and safe passport if you send your assistant to the man you know. Should you feel inclined to talk to the police, remember that we have killed in the past and will gladly do so again."

When he had finished, Jaganath Mullick stared at the paper, speechless.

"You don't know who could have stuck this chit in your pocket this morning?" Cort asked.

"No, sir," said the *babu*. "I stopped only for purchasing paper in front of Great Eastern, and for obtaining cigarets at tobacconist's."

"Nobody talked to you?"

"Talking, no. People of all castes and sexes were brushing against me in tobacconist's shop, too many to remember."

Cort took the note and reread it.

" 'Send your assistant to the man you know,' " he quoted. "Evidently this bird thinks I saw the whole business and am holding out for bigger hush money. If I only knew who the guy was, I'd bluff him."

"But you do not."

"I heard talk in the dark before Jones got killed, but it wasn't much. Jones was supposed to meet the gang tonight at Munshi Amir's bazar. At midnight." Cort lighted a cigaret, and stared into space until the match burned his fingers. "By jove, an idea!"

"You will notify police of proposed meeting, expecting arrests?"

"Hell, no, Mullick!" An excited gleam came into Cort's gray eyes. He grabbed the *babu's* arm eagerly. "No cops in this, Mullick. If that gang shows up on schedule tonight, it'll be the best damn news picture of the year for Calcutta. Go get me some fresh plates and the flash gun. Tonight at midnight I'll go to Munshi Amir's bazar and make the shot. It'll be great. I can see the captions already: 'Dope Ring Sought In Murder Caught By Camera'. Except that they don't write captions like that on the *Diplomat*. And if I can make the picture to go with my story, it might clear me. See, Mullick?"

"But what in case discovered by narcotic gentlemen?"

"God only knows what."

Jaganath Mullick wagged his head once.

"All you have to worry about is getting me the plates and the flashlight gadgets," said Cort. "I'll do the rest. You don't even have to come back here yourself. In fact, you'd better not. People seem to know you're seeing me. Anybody follow you out?"

"Partially," said the *babu*. "Changing *gharis* by ruse I came last distance without following."

"Don't come back before dark. If anything urgent turns up, send a *chaprassi* that nobody knows and who don't know me . . . So long, Mullick."

A sticky wind fanned the day into a glaring flame that slowly faded to a warm gray ember on which night trod, scattering stars and strange odors. A suggestion of coolness came hesitantly through the silhouettes of *tal* palms. Harry Cort squatted on the mud floor of the hut, smoking furiously in an effort to discourage a cloud of mosquitoes brazenly ignoring the seasonal change.

A rotund figure blotted out the dim light in the doorway. Cort stood up.

"What news?"

"Distressful news only," said Jaganath Mullick. "*Lakhs* of people have been questioning me. Police in scores have invaded *Diplomat* offices. News editor sahib promising cooperation for bringing you to justice."

"Simpson? The lousy bum! What's the idea?"

"*Izzat.* Honor of *Diplomat* appearing jeopardized in not aiding search for criminal photographer. Possibly so informed by Captain Beeker after long windy conference."

"Of course, Beeker! Then they've certainly had you followed out here tonight."

"Unsuccessfully so," replied Mullick. "Again changing *gharis* by ruse, I evaded suspicious follower."

"You came right here from the office?"

"Well, not quite exactly," said the *babu*, "having made brief halt at domicile for son's small camera—"

"You and that damned Brownie of yours!" broke in Cort. "Sure as hell there was somebody hanging around your place to pick up your trail."

"Hardly probable," said Mullick, "since coming halfway by foot power expressly for throwing off scent. Very sorry about son's small camera. However, for greatest news photo of year—"

"I told you you didn't have to come along."

"Am just now volunteering."

Cort was silent a moment. Then he said:

"All right, Mullick. Let's go."

He slung his camera across his shoulder and started out the door. Jaganath Mullick followed; then, with quick, waddling steps, came abreast of Cort.

"This way, this way. We have got to turn left," said Jaganath Mullick in a thick whisper. "I know where is *ghari* parking very near from end of left hand lane."

AS CORT and the *babu* swung into a narrow cross alley, a figure emerged from the shadows and followed them. It was the figure of a tall Indian, powerful looking despite a stooped frame. He moved into the cross alley with an odd, twisting walk.

Munshi Amir's bazar is outside the eastern limits of Calcutta proper. It lies beyond the Sealda and Mutla stations, on the north bank of the Balliaghata Canal. Cort and Jaganath Mullick left their *ghari* before they got to Palmer's Bridge, and made the last fifty yards or so on foot.

A bustling place by day, the bazar was deserted at midnight. The American and the Bengali walked stealthily through dark lines of closed shops and stalls. They saw sleeping ranks of ghostly palms guarding the dark waters of the canal. They heard the minor song of some one chanting *mantras* far on the other side. A light glimmered in the distance. They

made the circuit of the bazar without seeing signs of life. Suddenly Jaganath Mullick clutched Cort's arm and pointed.

Immediately before them a faint, wavering light glowed in the second story window of the only two-story house in the alley. They could see only mottled, ruddy patches on the ceiling. Cort decided to investigate.

He climbed to the roof of an adjoining one-story structure. The sloping, tiled roof of a Bengali hut is never built to be walked upon, yet the roof offered the only possible base for operations. Cort felt the bamboo ridge pole sag creakingly as he allowed his weight to settle on the tiles.

Standing as near the eaves as he dared, he found he could lean his hands against the two-story house. He worked his way carefully to the lighted window. He looked in.

Cort saw six men bending their heads together around a table. It was hard to recognize faces in the dim flicker of a tiny oil light. Three of the men were apparently Hindus. Two might be Eurasians. One was apparently white. He was one of the three who sat with their backs to the window.

The white man was talking. Cort could not hear his voice. For a moment he thought he recognized a mannerism in one man's gestures. The sense of familiarity gave Cort a peculiar start. His imagination must be playing tricks on him. Anyhow, the furtive, tense expression on the faces he could see told him that this was the group he was looking for. It was worth the risk to make the picture.

Cort signaled Jaganath Mullick, who was still on the ground. The *babu* passed the paraphernalia. Then Cort pulled him to the roof.

As the *babu* sat on the tiles, panting silently, shifting his feet uncertainly, Cort took another look through the window. He saw a revolver lying on the table close to the hand of the white man. Who was that white man, anyhow? He was showing some papers—official looking documents. Even in the dim light of the oil lamp, Cort thought he made out an American eagle on one of the sheets. He might be mistaken, of course, but if that were actually a United States Government seal, the papers were probably the stolen credentials of the late Franklin Jones. If they were—well, that settled everything.

Cort wondered briefly what his chances would be to leap through the window and capture the six men and evidence single handed. Not very good, he decided. He was so hopelessly outnumbered that such an act would be practically suicide. The long chance appealed to him, though . . . Still, the picture came before anything else. First he would make a flash of this gang while the documents were still on the table. Once he had a negative, he could stampede the meeting. The flash might startle them enough so that he could bluff his way to victory, leaving the camera with Jaganath Mullick in case of accident.

He turned and motioned to Mullick to stand by. The *babu* was fussing with his own camera again, damn him. Cort suppressed an oath. This was not the time for swearing. He raised the focusing hood of his own graflex—then stopped to listen. He heard some one walking, directly below him.

Jaganath Mullick had evidently heard the same thing, for he was staring at Cort with apprehension.

Cort crouched, to reduce visibility from the ground. The sound of footsteps ceased. After a moment of silence, the steps began again—faint, cautious. This time Cort saw a shadow moving.

He could make out nothing except that the figure was that of a large man who slunk, rather than walked, pausing a moment at the corner of the house, a vague dark blur in the starlight. The man was in an attitude of listening.

Cort held his breath. Mullick was a statue. Seconds ticked by and the dark blur remained motionless. Suddenly the man vanished around the corner of the

house. Cort breathed. Mullick moved an arm.

Cort stood up again, leaned forward and carefully put his camera on the window ledge. Peering into the focusing hood, he made the image sharp on the ground glass. Perfect. The group was just far away enough to bring both sides of the table into the same focal range. If he could only make the white man turn around—perhaps if he shouted just before he fired the flash. That would be dangerous, but he and Mullick could probably get away all right.

He opened his shutter. He was ready to expose. He'd better hurry while everything was in place. He put a cap under the clip in the bottom of the flash pan. He looked up, as he thought he heard the sound of a door closing. Then with his teeth he took the cork from a bottle of flash powder and poured a little mound on top of the cap. He started to hand the flash gun to Jaganath Mullick, who was busy arranging his Brownie on the sill beside Cort's camera.

At that moment Cort saw a new figure make an excited entrance into the room. It was a tall, slightly hunched Indian who walked rapidly with a strange, twisting movement. In the cruel lines of the face Cort recognized his adversary of the darkroom scuffle the night before.

The newcomer uttered a few quick, vehement words, pointing at the window through which Cort was peering. The six men about the table rose as one. The white man seized the revolver and whirled. A gasp of astonishment escaped Cort.

But Cort's automatic sense of pictorial values triumphed over his surprise. He reacted instantaneously to the perfect pose. His forefinger, hooked into the loop of the flash gun release, contracted.

A great blinding cloud of light burst, then puffed out into a rolling cloud of smoke.

Taken unawares by the flash, Jaganath Mullick uttered a frightened cry, started up, tottering on the edge of the roof, clinging to his little box camera.

The white man was charging the window, revolver in hand. The flash glinted luridly on the drawn, tense face of J. Harte Simpson, news editor of the *Diplomat!* Simpson fired.

Jaganath Mullick slipped, fell back heavily on the fragile roof. There was a clatter of tiles and the crack of bamboo as the *babu's* weighty body sank into the roof as though it were quicksand. He disappeared downward in an avalanche of tiles.

Cort felt the roof sway and give under his feet as the tiles slid off after Mullick. Instinctively he grabbed for the window ledge before him. At the same moment he heard the crash of glass and felt his wrists seized. His arms were nearly yanked from their sockets as he was dragged into the room. Something struck him on the head. He struggled to his feet, pulling one arm free. He was kicked in the side. Resounding pain smashed against one ear. He saw a brown face, struck out, felt his other arm released.

He was surrounded by the Indians and Eurasians. Vaguely he saw Simpson standing clear of the fight, leering behind the threat of his revolver. He saw a grimacing Eurasian raise a chair. Cort kicked him half across the room. He worked fists, elbows and knees in all directions. He butted and punched as brown men came at him from all sides. He sidestepped, swung a long right, and saw the hunched Indian of the darkroom collapse on the floor.

Cort was faring better than the odds entitled him. The sheer desperation of his plight, together with the faint hope that Jaganath Mullick had not been hurt in the fall and might return, converted him into a veritable demon. His knuckles bleeding, his clothes ripped, he bowled over Indian after Eurasian, dodged blows, kicked off tacklers.

Then J. Harte Simpson stepped up behind him and struck him down with the barrel of his revolver.

STRUGGLING back to consciousness through a splitting headache, Cort found himself lying on the floor, bound hand and foot. He was helpless.

The thin faced Simpson was standing over him, Cort's camera in his hand. The panting, bedraggled men of color stood behind Simpson.

"Damned meddler!" Simpson breathed. "I told you that American brass of yours would get you into trouble. What's more, I warned you in writing that if you didn't keep your damned Yankee nose out of this mess, that you'd get killed. You came anyhow—you and your ruddy flashlight camera. Well, it's your funeral."

Simpson swung the graflex against the wall several times. The sound of shattering glass and splintering wood was torture to Cort. He gritted his teeth.

"Here!" Simpson tossed the battered camera to a sad eyed Eurasian. "Take this out and get rid of it. Sink it for good. Now."

The Eurasian took the broken remains of the camera and left the room.

"And you—" Simpson handed his gun to the stoop shouldered giant with a turban., "You, Sang-dil, take *this* out and get rid of it." He indicated Harry Cort.

Cort glared as the tall, turbaned Hindu walked over to him, hooked his fingers under the rope that bound Cort's arms, and pulled him to his feet.

"Drag the snooping rat as far as the canal," Simpson continued. "Hold the muzzle close against him so the shot won't make too much noise, and let him drop into the water. If any one finds him before the jackals pull him apart, it can pass for suicide. I'll leave this in your hands, Sang-dil. Rush it through. I'm going."

Simpson paused at the door, bowed to Cort with mock politeness and disappeared.

Cort glanced about him. It looked like the last act, all right. No chance of Jaganath Mullick coming back. The *babu* was probably still running—unless he happened to be sitting down to catch his breath. Or he might have been knocked out when the roof caved in.

Sang-dil pushed Cort toward the door. Cort doubled up suddenly, slipped from his grasp, and came to life again. Fighting as fiercely as his bonds allowed, he hopped about, head down, butting over two men. Then Sang-dil clipped him on the jaw, renewed his hold, and ordered two Eurasians to seize his feet. The rest of the crowd went out first. Then Cort found himself being lifted bodily and carried down a dark staircase feet first.

He had barely started the descent when hurried footsteps sounded on the stairs below, and a hoarse whisper cut the dark:

"Sang-dil! Sang-dil!" a voice called. "*Kya hai?*"

The men who were carrying Cort stopped. A man brushed past and muttered some rapid Hindustani to Sang-dil. The big Hindu dropped Cort. The American fell like a log, striking his head on a stone step. He heard feet running away. He felt hot breath on his face as some one bent over him. He was aware of a hand, fumbling in his breast pocket. He thought something was plucking at his bonds. More footsteps followed—then silence.

He sat up. He tried to move his numbed arms and found he could raise them stiffly from his sides. He stretched his legs. He was free. His bonds had been cut. He drew his feet up, and kicked an object that scraped metallically. Reaching forward, he picked up a revolver.

He clutched the gun, got painfully to his feet and started down the stairs. A little dazed, he wondered what lay before him in the dark. Every few steps he stopped and listened. He thought he heard sounds outside.

When he was nearly at the bottom of the stairway the outside door flew open. The glare of three electric torches blinded him. He stepped back for one confused second. Then he brandished his gun shouting:

"*Chale jao!* No tricks, or I'll blow you all to hell!"

As he stood blinking at the light, he realized that he could see behind it. He was vaguely aware of men in uniform. He lowered his gun. Immediately men sprang, tackled him, bore him to the ground. Handcuffs glistened a moment, then snapped about Cort's wrists. The gun was twisted away.

"Got 'im!" exclaimed a cockney voice

More lights illuminated the scene. More uniforms appeared. The place swarmed with police. European constables with spiked mustaches, Eurasians shouting in *chi-chi* accents, *Pahare-wallas* with red turbans. Cort saw many men he knew, men he had laughed and joked with on picture stories during the past year. No one was laughing now. They were all cold and efficient. They pushed Cort toward an automobile in which a portly deputy commissioner sat.

"Hello, Reynolds," said Cort. "You're five minutes too late."

"I'd say we were just in time, Cort. Sorry to see you under these circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"You know damned well you're wanted for murder. We've been after you since yesterday; might still be looking, if we hadn't been informed you'd be here tonight."

"Didn't my *babu* come for you just now?"

"Nobody came for us. We received an anonymous chit saying that the murderer of Franklin Jones would be in Munshi Amir's bazar at half after midnight."

"The murderer's been here," said Cort, "but he's gone. I came here to photograph him for your benefit."

"Photograph him?" The deputy commissioner laughed. "Were you taking pictures of my men with that gun of yours?"

"That wasn't my gun. That belonged to Simpson. One of the gang dropped it on the stairs when they ran."

AGAIN the deputy commissioner laughed. He wasn't expected to believe that story, was he? Early evidence already pointed to Cort as murderer of Franklin Jones. His story about the flashlight didn't check with the facts. There was no trace of any camera in the house, and no trace of the ropes with which Cort said he had been bound. And where were all these ruffians that were supposed to fill the house? Better search him, men.

Constables went through Cort's pockets. One of them brought out a sheaf of official looking papers. The deputy commissioner examined them and stared.

"And these credentials of the late Mr. Franklin Jones, stolen from him when he was murdered—I suppose you just borrowed these to photograph them, too?"

"They—why, they planted 'em on me!" exclaimed Cort.

The ghost of a humorless, pitying smile crossed the deputy commissioner's face.

"Sorry, Cort," he said. "You're not plausible. I wish I could believe you, but—"

Twenty minutes later, still handcuffed, Cort sat in an uncomfortable chair, dripping with perspiration, while police inquisitors pelted him with questions.

"I tell you there's no damned accomplices because I didn't commit any damned crime!" Cort repeated for the fifteenth time.

"Kindly be polite," cautioned a severe police official from beneath a motionless gray mustache.

"If you are as innocent as you make out, how did you happen to know of this rendezvous you describe at Munshi Amir's bazar?" demanded the corpulent Reynolds.

Did he have to go into that again? He'd already told them a dozen times that he overheard talk in the dark, the night Jones was killed. Jones had evidently promised money to his murderer and accomplices. He didn't recognize the other

man at the time, but it was obviously Simpson. Yes, J. Harte Simpson of the *Diplomat*. That was the man who presided over the party at Munshi Amir's bazar.

"Ridiculous. Mr. Simpson has called in here several times this evening to inquire if there were any developments. He's probably at his home now," said one inquisitor.

"Send a *chaprassi* to Simpson and ask him to come immediately to the Lal Bazar police office," ordered Reynolds.

Fine. Cort could ask for nothing better than to confront Simpson. No, he didn't know that Franklin Jones was a detective come to break up a morphine smuggling ring. Simpson must have known, though. That's why he killed Jones. Jones had evidently been posing as an American agent for the smuggling organization, and had got Simpson to send out a call to the *mofussil* to bring his lieutenants in from the country. When Simpson suspected the trap, the boys were probably already on the way, so he put Jones out of the picture.

"You might tell your theory to Mr. Simpson," said Reynolds. "Here he is."

The white faced Simpson walked jauntily into the room, attired in the short white jacket of formal evening dress.

"Congratulations, Reynolds," he said. "You've found your man."

"Quick change, Simpson," said Cort. "Too bad you couldn't change that scratch on your cheek like you changed your duds."

Simpson smiled superciliously.

"If you must know," he said, "that scratch was inflicted by the wife of a high Bengal official."

"Liar!" Cort shouted. An echo of his exclamation seemed to come from the anteroom.

"I didn't come here to be insulted by a common dope peddler and murderer!"

"Go see who's making that row in the anteroom," directed Reynolds to a subordinate, as shrill sounds of an altercation in Hindustani continued.

Investigation was unnecessary, however, for Jaganath Mullick bounded excitedly into the room despite the efforts of two native policemen who were hopelessly outweighed. He was brandishing a large bromide print, still damp.

"Look, Mister Cort," he cried. "You said Brownie camera unsuitable for making sharp negatives. You said respectable enlargements beyond capacities of yours truly Mullick. You intimated that ten thousand years insufficient for Mullick to learn process of making print from wet negative. Behold answer to all objections."

He held out a perfect picture of the group at Munshi Amir's bazar as the flash went off. There were slight blurs of movement, but the faces were all unmistakable. There was a full faced view of Simpson, revolver in hand, charging toward the lens. There was a suggestion of the Franklin Jones papers on the table.

"Take a *dekko* at that!" crowed Cort.

"I shouldn't give too much attention to a *babu*," said Simpson haughtily.

"This checks with Cort's story," said Reynolds. "Here's Simpson with a gun. Good Lord, here's Sang-dil, convicted murderer who escaped from the Andamans last year. Here's Dhobi Das—"

"Trick photography," insisted Simpson. "Some composite picture they've concocted between them."

"No such trickery used," interrupted Jaganath Mullick. "Here is negative dried in haste by spirit of wine in manner instructed by Mister Cort."

"Let's see." Simpson grabbed at the film. The manacled Cort leaped to block him. A detective intervened.

"Will you pardon this intrusion?"

Two newcomers stood in the doorway. One was Fuller, blue eyed American consul. The other was a dark man with bushy eyebrows. His head was bandaged and he carried his right arm in a sling.

"I'd like to introduce Mr. Franklin Jones," said the consul.

There was a puzzled, incredulous silence.

"Franklin Jones?" queried the deputy police commissioner.

"Mr. Jones was beaten, robbed, left for dead and locked in a goods van attached to the Punjab Express last week," said the consul. "He recovered consciousness in a Patna hospital, and came here as soon as he heard what had taken place."

"Then who was the man we buried this afternoon as Franklin Jones?" demanded the deputy police commissioner.

"An enterprising narcotics smuggler of New York and Bombay," explained Jones, "who stole my papers after he thought he had killed me. Illicit export of Indian morphine to the United States is carried on by two large organizations. One operates from Calcutta, the other from Bombay. The Bombay ring has long intended to absorb the rival organization and it was in pursuit of their expansion program that the Bombay gentleman assumed my identity. By first posing as an American agent of the Calcutta organization, he hoped to get their confidence. At the proper moment he would gain control of his rivals by revealing himself as a representative of the American Government."

"The rat!"

"You might explain that remark, Mr. Simpson," said the deputy police commissioner, arising to face Simpson.

Simpson did not reply. He glanced about him desperately. Then he sat down heavily.

"What have I to explain?" he asked in a low voice. "There is no accusation against me."

"Oh, yes, there is," said Franklin Jones. "I have some pretty definite information against you—letters in your handwriting which I seized in the United States."

Simpson's chin went up, and his eyes flashed.

"Why should we believe this man?" he demanded. "How do we know he is not an imposter, and the real Jones actually killed?"

Without a word Jones stepped to the deputy commissioner's desk, fumbled with the papers lying there and examined the passport which bore his name. With his good hand he produced a pen knife, which he opened with his teeth. He carefully slipped the point of the blade under the photograph on the passport, and worked it back and forth until he could peel off the picture of the murder victim. His own photograph was underneath.

The deputy police commissioner nodded to two European constables who immediately grasped Simpson by each arm.

Jaganath Mullick nudged Cort.

"Again photography triumphing over falsehood," he said gleefully. "What would world do without us photographers, eh, Mister Cort?"

"Listen, Mullick," said Cort. "You did a swell job on this. I got to hand it to you. But tell me one thing. Why did you go off and leave me with that pack of hyenas in the bazar?"

"You inferred pictures more important," said Jaganath Mullick, "and I knew police arriving soon, having sent unanimous chit asking expedition at 12:30. Was slightly fearful earlier arrival might spoil flashlight. However, nothing spoiled, eh, Mister Cort?"

"No," said Cort, feeling a sore rib, "nothing."

Concluding

A Mystery Novel of Hashknife and Sleepy

By W. C. TUTTLE

The SCAR

NOT EVEN at the height of the range war between Old Angus McLeod's Bar-M ranch, and Buck Pearson of the HP, had Pima Valley been so torn with strife. Old Angus was dead, but young Red Brant was his heir; and Red opposed just as stubbornly every move of Buck Pearson to gain control of the Bar-M, as ever McLeod had.

Buck did not hide the fact that he was determined to ruin Red Brant—any way he could. He was quick to voice the opinion that Red had robbed the Pima City-Gila Springs stage, from which ten thousand dollars was missing after it had overturned in the road. Red admitted being the first to reach the stage after the accident; but the only thing he carried away was the single passenger—a girl who said her name was Lorna Pearson, bearing a letter addressed to Buck, whom she believed to be her father . . .

Buck accepted Lorna with bad grace, but did not cease in his efforts to pin the robbery on Red. He rode to Pima City, the shipping point of the money, in hope of turning up some damning clue. The night of his arrival Jim Marshall, an employee of the State penitentiary, in search of an escaped convict named Joe Cross, was murdered.

The only acquaintances of Marshall in town were Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens, two wandering cowboys with a

of FATE

taste for mysteries. They became interested and learned from Speck Smalley, the deputy sheriff of Gila Springs, that the description of Cross Marshall had given them resembled that of an old derelict called Mojave, whom Red Brant had befriended.

Hashknife and Sleepy returned to Gila Springs with Smalley, to learn that the body of the sheriff, Mica Miller, also murdered, had been discovered a short distance from Red Brant's ranch-house.

Hashknife rode out to the scene of the killing with the deputy and, by chance, came upon a revolver belonging to Red Brant, half buried in the sand. He kept the discovery to himself, although a warrant was immediately sworn out for Red —who promptly dropped out of sight.

To cap the climax of this astounding series of killings, that night Tex Thorne, Buck Pearson's foreman, was murdered in the patio of the HP ranch-house. And Buck, wringing a confession from Lorna that Red had visited her earlier in the evening, decided to take the law in his own hands. Gathering his men together, Buck rode for the Bar-M—not knowing that Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens were having supper with old Oklahoma, Red Brant's foreman.

When Oklahoma went to see who the visitors were, Hashknife and Sleepy slipped into the shadows alongside the house. Buck yelled something to his men, then felled old Oklahoma with a heavy blow.

"That evens us up, you dirty old sidewinder," said Buck. "Now we'll take this shack apart and get Red Brant!"

HASHKNIFE hurried back to Sleepy.

"It's Pearson an' his gang," he told Sleepy. "I just saw Buck knock Oklahomy down, an' they're searchin' the place now."

"Knocked the old man down, eh?" growled Sleepy. "Well, now, that ain't a nice thing to do! Do you reckon they'll find Red?"

"Who knows? I'm goin' back an' have another look. If they do get him, I might have to figure a way to get him loose. They ain't got no more right to him than we have."

Hashknife sneaked back and flattened himself against the side of the house at the window. Apparently the men had searched every inch of the place, and were back, trying to get information out of Oklahoma, whose nose and upper lip were bleeding.

Suddenly there came the sound of buggy wheels, and into the place came

Lorna Pearson. She had driven through Gila Springs and out to the Bar M. The men in the house apparently heard the sound of the vehicle, for all sound ceased within.

Hashknife was on the wrong side of the house to see the horse and buggy, but he heard Lorna's voice when she stopped the animal. Quickly he circled the rear of the house and sneaked toward the porch. He stopped short. Just ahead of him, crouched against the wall, was another man.

Lorna was at the top step before she realized that it was Buck Pearson and his men who were meeting her. The men had halted inside the doorway, but Buck was in front of her, grinning maliciously.

"What do you think you're doin' over here?" he asked.

She did not reply, and Buck laughed.

"Got a horse an' buggy, eh?"

He grasped her arm as if demanding a reply.

"You had no right to keep me there," she said weakly.

"No? I had the right of a father to keep his daughter home."

One of the cowboys laughed, and Buck whirled angrily.

"Get your horses an' go home," he ordered them. "Buzz, you lead my horse —I'm goin' back in the buggy."

"All right, Buck," replied Buzz. "C'mon, boys. No; go out the back way."

Buck stepped back and closed the front door, shutting off the light.

"Get in that buggy," ordered Buck.

He led her down the steps and to the buggy. So intent was he in seeing that she got in that he did not perceive the crouched figure leave the corner of the porch. Hashknife ran forward in time to see the bulky figures of the two men blend in the darkness. Then he heard the sound of a blow. Then two figures came up the steps. Hashknife heard Lorna say:

"Oh, Red, where did you come from? Didn't they—" and then the door closed behind them.

The buggy horse was moving away. From down near the corral came a man's voice, yelling Buck's name. It seemed to frighten the animal, which whirled around and went trotting back toward the gate.

"Hey! Buck! Wait a minute! Our horses are gone! He-e-e-ey!"

The horse was apparently going faster now. The rest of the boys had arrived, arguing, cursing.

"There must be horses around here," said a cowboy. "We don't want to walk home."

"There ain't a horse in the corrals, or in the stable," replied another. "I'll betcha Red Brant cut our broncs loose."

"I'd like to smash this whole damn Bar M outfit before we go home," said another.

"Start smashin', damn you," came Oklahoma's voice from a window. "I've got two dandy loads of buckshot for the first smasher; so jist cut your polecat loose."

"Hey—what's this? It's Buck! What's wrong with you, Buck?"

Buck didn't seem to know, but it was apparent that he had been hit over the head.

"He's been hit," declared Buzz Brown. "Now, who done that—the girl?"

"Don't be a fool! That girl never hit him. Buck, are you sick?"

"What the hell happened?" queried Buck weakly, feeling of his head.

"What this here outfit needs is a fortune teller," said a cowboy dryly.

"Buck, our horses are gone. We've all got to walk home."

"Yea-a-a-ah, an' you better start now," drawled Oklahoma. "These here twenty-four buckshot will jist about distribute even-like among you, an' I'm honin' to drag these two triggers." There did not seem to be any disposition to argue the case with Oklahoma.

Hashknife ran around the back way and down to the corral, where he whistled a peculiar call. From across the corral floated the answer.

Hashknife ducked through the fence and joined Sleepy.

"I moved our horses out in the brush

after you left, Hashknife. It was lucky I did, 'cause they came lookin'."

"Good. You turned their horses loose?"

"Yeah. A good walk won't hurt any of 'em."

"All right, let's go home; everythin' is jake."

CHAPTER X

SPECK SMALLEY HANDS IN HIS BADGE

SPECK SMALLEY, erstwhile deputy sheriff of Pima Valley, was moodily cleaning out his desk. Speck's chin jutted defiantly, but his eyes were sad. There was considerable difference between a hundred and fifty dollars per month as a deputy and forty a month as a cowpuncher.

Wes Ellis, who had been managing the Gila Springs-Pima City stage route for two years, sat across the desk from Speck. Ellis, a sallow, squint eyed person of about forty-five, looked closely at everything Speck removed from his desk.

"These is jist things I've accumulated," said Speck, "so you don't need to be so damn inspective."

"I ain't a-watchin' you, Smalley."

"Then you don't see what you're lookin' at,"—testily. "There; I guess that's all my stuff. Mica Miller's badge is in that there upper drawer, an' here's mine."

He unhooked the badge of office and threw it on the desk. He glanced up as Hashknife strolled in through the doorway.

"Hyah, Sheriff," said Hashknife.

"You ain't talkin' to me," replied Smalley. "I'm through."

"What do you mean?"

Speck laughed shortly and shook his head.

"My damn fault," he said. "I never realized before that Buck Pearson runs this country. He got word to the commissioners to the effect that I ain't qualified to be sheriff; so they—well, hell, what's the use? They said mebbe they'd see that I was kept on as deputy, but I didn't want it. They appointed Wes Ellis as sheriff, an' he's appointed Ab Terrill as deputy. You know Wes, don't-cha? No? This is him. You know Terrill."

"Know him to look at," said Hashknife.

"That's plenty. Wes here is one of Buck's men—so Buck will be the sheriff."

"I wouldn't say that," said Ellis weakly.

"You wouldn't say anythin', 'less Buck told you to say it. C'mon, Hashknife; let's me an' you have a drink. Wes is goin' out an' arrest Red Brant. An' I want to ask you—what happened to Buck's head?" They left the office and crossed the street.

"Did somethin' happen to it?"

"He's got it bandaged. Four of his bunch was here about midnight—the sore footedest bunch you ever seen. Not a horse among 'em."

"How would I know what's wrong with 'em, Speck?"

" 'Cause you was out there at the Bar M last night—an' so was they. Buck knows you was out there. He was there this mornin', tryin' to git that girl to come home, an' I reckon Oklahomy told him a few things. I hears Buck talkin' to Fred Skelton, an' Buck says, 'I'll betcha it was them two smart punchers, Hartley an' Stevens—an' if I find out they cut them horses loose, I'll shore trim their combs.' "

"Who is Fred Skelton?" asked Hashknife.

"Prosecutin' attorney for this county."

"Why, I thought Charley Bass was prosecutor."

"Resigned yesterday, an' they appointed Skelton—another one of Buck's friends. Bass resigned, after they appointed Ellis as sheriff. Let's go git that drink."

"All of which would lead one to suspect that Buck Pearson kinda runs this country," said Hashknife solemnly.

"You'll find it out, if you lock horns with him. An' another thing: if you know where Red Brant is hidin' out, you tell him to get to hell out of this valley, 'cause if they catch him, he ain't got a show. The next term of court opens Tuesday, an' the docket is slim. If they catch Red,

he'll be tried right away, an' it's a thousand to one bet he's convicted."

Hashknife nodded in agreement. The cards were all stacked against Red Brant.

"You say that girl is out at the Bar M, Speck?"

"Yeah, that's what I hear. She's Buck's daughter."

"Why did she leave her father's house?"

"Search me—unless she wanted to see Red Brant. Don't ask me any more questions. I'm dry."

But Hashknife wanted to ask questions; so he left Sleepy in town and rode out to the Bar M, where he found Oklahoma down at the corral. The old cowboy was glad to see him and immediately told him about Buck's being out there that morning, trying to get Lorna to go back with him. Oklahoma knew all about the changes in the sheriff's and prosecutor's office.

"I done told her about you," said Oklahoma. "She's a funny girl. Don't say a word agin Buck. Mebbe 'cause he's her pa. But she did swipe that horse an' buggy last night. Buck an' his gang started to walk to town, an' out about a mile they found the horse an' buggy tangled up in the brush; so Buck rode home.

"Buck told her she'd have to stay out at the HP ranch until after Red was arrested. An' then along comes Faro Flemin' an' his sister to see Buck; an' Lorna swiped the horse an' buggy. I shore had to laugh when she told us about it."

"Does Buck know that Red socked him last night?"

"Well, no, he don't. In fact,"—dryly—"he suspects you."

"Why would he suspect me?"

"Well, I dunno, unless it was after what I told him about you bein' a old friend of mine an' all that. Oh, I shore told him things. I said I'd bet him better 'n even money that you'd find out who killed all these here corpses we've been burdened with."

Hashknife sighed deeply and rolled a smoke.

"I'm sorry you said anythin' about me, Oklahomy."

"Yeah, I reckon, mebbe I did brag a little. But I can prove any lie I told him, y'betcha. There's men in Lo Lo Valley that would—"

"I'd like to meet Miss Pearson," interrupted Hashknife.

"I'd shore admire to make you used to her. C'mon."

Lorna shook hands with Hashknife, and they sat down together in the shade of the porch.

"Oklahoma has told me quite a lot about you," she said.

"I s'pose." Hashknife smiled.

"He is worried about the changes in the sheriff's and the prosecuting attorney's office," said Lorna.

"I know."

Hashknife's keen gray eyes searched the girl's face. She was not only beautiful, but she looked above the average in intelligence.

"You are wondering about me?" she asked.

"Yes'm. You see, you're sort of a mystery girl around here."

"But I am not a mystery, Mr. Hartley."

"Prob'ly not—to you. Mind tellin' me the whole story, Miss Pearson? I've got a good reason for wantin' to know."

"There isn't much to tell. The story is rather commonplace."

LORNA began with the death of her mother and her search for her father. Hashknife interrupted with a few questions regarding her father's business, his life prior to the time he left home. Lorna was unable to answer many of them. She explained how she had discovered that Harold J. Pearson was a cattleman in Pima Valley. She told him of the wrecked stage and her recovery in the Bar M ranch-house.

Then she described her meeting with her father in the hotel. She told of the sealed letter and of her treatment at the HP ranch. Hashknife was very much interested in her version of what happened

the night Tex Thorne was killed. She told him what Red Brant had said when he came back to her window that evening, and of Dopey Dowling's unsuccessful attempt to capture Red single handed.

"I felt like a captive at the HP ranch," she told him. "Why, my father the same as intimated that I was not to leave there. He—he said I was the bait to catch Red Brant. But when I saw that horse and buggy, it was my chance to get away and I took it. The horse ran away with me, but I managed to get control of him. I was afraid to go through Gila Springs in daylight; so I waited until it was real dark and then came out here."

"An' ran into your father an' his gang." Hashknife smiled. "I know what happened, 'cause I was out there beside the house."

"You were? How wonderful!"

"An' risky,"—dryly. "But what are you goin' to do?"

"I don't know. I suppose the proper thing would be to go back home."

"To the HP ranch?"

"Not at all. That will never be home to me."

"Then you ain't got much affection for your father, eh?"

"Not the slightest. I fulfilled my mother's last wish, and that is all I care anything about, Mr. Hartley. Harold Johnson Pearson is merely a name to me —not my father."

Oklahoma came out on the porch, and Hashknife noticed that he was wearing two guns. The old man's nose and upper lip were swollen from Buck's blow.

"I'd shore like a look at that letter you gave Buck," said Hashknife. "You don't know what was in it at all, eh?"

"No, I did not see what it said."

"Speakin' of letters," said Oklahoma. "Mojave found one out there in the yard this mornin', an' he gave it to me. There's no name on the envelop, an' I can't read very well. It's in there on the table, under the lamp. I'll git it for you."

There was blood on the envelop which Oklahoma handed to Lorna. She recognized it immediately, and Hashknife chuckled softly.

"Buck lost it at the buggy last night," he said. "Fell out of his pocket when he dropped, I'll betcha."

Lorna held it in her two hands, staring at it. Finally she looked at Hashknife and said:

"Mother told me that no one else was ever to see what this contained. Perhaps it is a secret that—"

"That's right," said Hashknife. "But it might—you never can tell how a thing like that might help us out. Suppose I read it—jist me. If it is a secret, it'll remain a secret, Miss Pearson."

"Let him read it, Lorna," advised Oklahoma. "If you knew what I know about him, you would."

Silently she handed him the letter, and he read it slowly. Then he folded it up again and handed it back to her.

"No," he said thoughtfully, "it don't help us any."

"Is it a secret?" asked Lorna softly.

"Yeah, I—I reckon it is, Miss Pearson. I believe I'd burn it."

She gave it back to him and watched him crumple it up and touch a lighted match to one corner. Suey Ong came out, a bland smile on his old face as he greeted Hashknife warmly.

"You stay sluppah?" he asked. "Make velly fine biscuit."

"That's shore an inducement, Suey Ong. I'll stay."

"Velly good—can do."

The talk drifted around to earlier days in the valley, before Pearson came, and later to the bloodless feud between old Angus McLeod and Buck.

"Money talks," said Oklahoma, "an' Buck had plenty. He owned that Lucky Cross gold mine up in Red Moon Valley in Nevada, an' he shore accumulated plenty *dinero*. But he was the original discoverer of the property, an' I reckon he earned what he made."

"Mother often spoke about him being fond of prospecting," said Lorna. "She said he was never satisfied to live in the city."

"But he turned to cattle," said Hashknife.

"Yeah," said Oklahoma, "he did, dang him. I've jist got a feelin' that me an' him are goin' to have trouble. I told him this mornin' to keep away from here—an' that goes. Notice I'm packin' two guns? Prob'ly have Wes Ellis foolin' around out here, too. Wes Ellis! Can you imagine 'em makin' him sheriff? An' that drunken Fred Skelton! Prosecutin' Attorney Skelton! I'll betcha every one of the old boys in Boot Hill at Tombstone laughed so hard that the rocks slid off their graves. An' there's Ab Terrill, jist as drunken as the rest of 'em. Not a brain in his head, jist wanderin' around by instinct."

ALL OF WHICH was quite true, attested by the fact that the three newly appointed office holders were leaning against the bar in the Pima Saloon & Gambling House, drunk to the gills. They were celebrating their good fortune. Skelton was less than thirty, tall, gangling, with a long, lean neck, prominent Adam's apple and a superior sort of smile. There was nothing in the shape of his head which might indicate superior knowledge. In fact, his short career as a lawyer had failed to disclose any latent ability.

Ab Terrill was an ordinary cowpuncher; always had been, as far back as he could remember, and this was his first bid for fame. Wes Ellis was nondescript, content to drift; kicked into an office which he did not know anything about, but thought he did.

"I can remem'er when I was jush a ord'nary puncher," said Terrill, being in a reminiscent mood. He looked owlishly at himself in the back bar mirror, admiring the badge on his stringy vest.

"We'll do big things," stated Skelton loftily. "We'll put thish county on the map, tha's what we'll do. Shove on that bottle, barten'er."

"Thaz ri'," said Ellis huskily. "We'll show 'm thing 'r two."

"We need good hangin'," said Skelton. "Publizity, thaz what we need."

"Whazzat?" asked Terrill, pouring most of his liquor on his boots.

"Ad-vertise."

"Huh? Advertise for a good hangin', Fred?"

"Have good hangin'. My, my, you're awful dumb, Ab."

"Tha's all right, all ri'. We'll catchum, you hangum, eh, Wes?"

"Betcher life."

"I can hang anybody," stated Skelton, "if I git a good case."

"How 'bout Red Brant?"

"He's a good case."

"Good, hell!"

"I mean I'd hang him easy."

"Whaffor?" gurgled Terrill. "He needs hard hangin'."

"I'm goin' out an' gittum," stated Wes gravely.

"When?" asked the lawyer anxiously.

"Ri' now."

"Take my advice an' go to bed," said the bartender.

"I beg pardon," said Skelton stiffly. The bartender muttered something about all damn fools not being dead yet, and went to the other end of the bar to serve a customer.

"I reshent that," said Skelton. "I deeply reshent that, sir."

"Shame here," choked Terrill. "I cer'nly do."

"Do what?" queried Ellis owlishly.

"I—I reshent shomethin'."

"What?"

"Let's shing," suggested Terrill.

"Nossir, I'll not shing," declared Ellis. "I'm goin' git Red Brant."

"Can't no barten'er tell me when to go to bed," said Skelton.

"How could he?" queried Terrill. "Why, you don' even know when yourshelf. If brains was money you'd owe ever'body, Freddy."

"Are you tryin' to inshult me, shir?"

"I know better'n that."

"You bet you know better'n that. How do you know better'n that?"

"Lis'n, Freddy; you're drunk. You're

proshecutin' 'torney, but you're drunk. I wouldn't try to inshult you, 'cause I don' believe it can be done. An' don't call me 'shir'. I hate to be shirred. An' 'f you don't act like man among men, I'll take you down jist like umbreller."

Skelton rested his brow on the bar top and sobbed softly.

"Whazzamatter 'ith 'm?" asked Ellis wonderingly. "Gitta drink stuck in his throat?"

"I thought you went out af'er Red Brant."

"Make'm quit cryin', can'tcha? I hate tears."

"Them ain't tears, them's gin drops. Smell'm."

They shoved Skelton aside and sniffed, while Skelton goggled foolishly.

"Gin," pronounced Terrill. "Ought to cry in a bottle."

Terrill let out a joyful whoop, slapped Ellis on the back and knocked him against the bar.

"Per-pet-u-al motion! Whee-e-e-e!" He swiped at Ellis again, missed him and bumped his own head against the bar, slithering down to sit on the rail.

"You jiggers can't raise no roughhouse in here," stated the bartender. "You ought to be ashamed. If Buck Pearson thought—"

"Who hit me?" demanded Terrill. "I crave to know who hit me on the head from behind."

"The barten'er," said Ellis drunkenly. "Didn't you hear him shay he was ashamed of us?"

"Oh, thish is terrible," wailed Terrill. "I never thought I'd git to a point where a barten'er would be 'shamed of me."

"C'mon," urged Ellis. "I gotta job to do. C'mon, Freddy."

"Who you orderin' round?"

"One of the three biggest damn fools in this valley, an' you know which one it is," said the disgusted bartender. He had no respect for any of the three.

"We'll git horsh and buggy," said Terrill thickly.

CHAPTER XI

HASHKNIFE SENDS A TELEGRAM

IT WAS NEARLY dark by the time Suey Ong called them to supper. As they sat down, Red Brant, grinning widely, sidled in through the kitchen. He was a happy looking outlaw and shook hands all around.

"Full of splinters." He laughed. "Been hidin' in a hole in a pile of old lumber. Well, how's everythin' goin', folks?"

"Looky here," said Oklahoma. "They's been plenty changes since you heard things, Red. Wes Ellis an' Ab Terrill are runnin' the sheriff's office, an' Fred Skelton is prosecutin' attorney."

The smile quickly faded from Red's face. Oklahoma turned toward the living room door.

"I'm goin' to keep both eyes peeled while you folks eat supper. Suey Ong, you git the food on the table an' then you watch from the kitchen door."

"Can do," said the Chinese gravely.

Red looked wistfully at Lorna.

"I guess it's goodby tonight, Lorna. I'd have had a chance with Charley Bass prosecutin' me, an' Smalley would have been a safe jailer; but I don't reckon I care to run a chance with his gang."

"You mean you'll go away, Red?" asked Lorna anxiously.

"Yeah—a long ways from Pima Valley. I don't reckon they'll chase me far."

"But where will you go, Red?"

"*Quien sabe?* Hartley—" he leaned across the table—"Oklahomy has told me a lot about you, and there's a couple things I'd like to have you do for me. Wait a moment."

Red went into the other room, came back in a few moments with a tablet and a pencil.

"Buck Pearson wants this ranch, Hartley," he said. "It splits his spread in two, an' I control water that Buck would give his right arm to own. I'm goin' to turn this ranch over to Oklahomy, an' I want you to witness the notice I'm goin' to write."

Red wrote it quickly, signed it, and Hashknife witnessed the signature.

"One more thing," said Red. "I don't trust Buck an' his gang. He's Lorna's father, you know—but—will you see that she gits safely to Pima City an' on the train for her home?"

"I shore will, Brant."

"Let's eat."

No one ate much. It seemed as though all of them were listening for a warning sound.

"Are you heeled for guns an' money?" asked Hashknife.

"Plenty—thank you. Give me fifteen minutes start, an' they'll never pick me up in this county. But I hate to go; hate to be run out. I'm not guilty, but—well—" Red smiled slowly— "the wolf never asks the calf for an alibi. I hate to speak thataway about your father, Lorna—but he's shore dealin' me plenty trouble right now."

"I—I guess we are all rather miserable," she said softly.

"What about?" asked Mojave. "I think the beans are great."

"You never got beans like those in Red Moon Valley, Nevada," said Hashknife.

Old Mojave laid down his knife and looked intently at Hashknife.

"Red Moon Valley?" he repeated. "Red Moon Valley, Nevada."

"You prospected there, didn't you, Mojave?"

"Yeah, I b'lieve I did. Huh! Pass the biscuits, will you, please?"

It was dark by this time. Suey Ong was on guard outside the kitchen, and the eagle eyed Oklahoma was out beyond the porch, watching.

Red got to his feet and leaned across the table.

"Come down by the corrals with me, Lorna?" he asked. "I—I'd like to talk a little while, before I pull out—an' it's dangerous in here. An' besides I'd like to let Oklahomy an' Suey Ong have their supper."

"Better put on a shawl," advised Hashknife. "Your dress is kinda light colored, Miss Pearson."

Lorna found a dark *serape*, which she wrapped around her slim shoulders, and they went through the kitchen. Hashknife went out to call Oklahoma. He was halfway down to the big gate, when he suddenly stopped to listen; then he came back to the steps.

"There's a buggy comin'," he said.

"Shore sounds like one. Red an' the girl are down by the corral; so that part's all right. They'll hear an' see the buggy."

Oklahoma shifted his two guns to a handy position.

"Take it easy," advised Hashknife. "Let's go in an' meet 'em in the lamplight."

They went in and closed the door, just before the buggy came through the gate; and they heard it stop close by the porch.

It was Skelton, Ellis and Terrill, too drunk to realize exactly what they were doing. They stumbled up the steps and came in when Hashknife answered their knock on the door.

"How do-o-o," said Skelton, trying to be dignified.

"How are you," grated Oklahoma.

"'S Red to home?" asked Terrill.

"You damn fool!" snorted Oklahoma. "Didja think he would be?"

"Tha's all ri'," added Ellis. "Don' git shore, Oklahomy. We're the law."

"You're three drunken barflies, an' if you don't git out of here, I'll salivate all of you. Law, hell! You're Buck Pearson's idea of law."

"Jus' moment," begged Skelton. "Anythin' you shay can be used against you. We're here on 'ficial business."

"Where's Red?" asked Terrill with drunken gravity. "We can't stay here all night, y' know."

"Steady, Oklahomy," advised Hashknife, laughing. "This here is quite a problem. Suppose we call Red an' let him shoot it out with 'em."

"Whazzat?" asked Terrill quickly.

"You came to take him, didn't you?"

"Nobody shed anythin' about sh-shootin'."

"He won't be taken alive, you know."

"Thasso? Didja hear that, Wes?"

"Hear what?"

"Red Brant won' be took alive."

"Don' be ri-ri-ridic'l's," said Skelton gravely. "Lemme talk with him."

Hashknife laughed softly and shook his head.

"The minute he'd see you three drunks, he'd punch holes through every one of you."

"Hell!" said Oklahoma. "You jiggers ain't even armed."

Terrill made a grab for his empty holster, and an expression of pained and drunken surprise crossed his face.

"Gone!" he grunted vacantly. "I'll betcha I lost it. You shee, I rode the horsh, 'cause the buggy was too crowded. Didn't you have gun, Wes?"

Wes shook his head helplessly.

"Bein' sheriff for one day, you couldn't remember everythin', could you?" said Hashknife blandly. "You'll learn."

"Thish," decided Skelton, "is what you'd call a *foop paw.*"

"Meanin' which?" asked Terrill.

"Tha's French for damn ignorance."

"You don't need to use French to describe you fellers," said Oklahoma. "Plain United States covers you pretty well."

Oklahoma looked at Hashknife, shook his head in disgust, glanced toward the rear door, and his eyes jerked wide open. Hashknife whirled.

It was Suey Ong, head down, staggering drunkenly, his face and neck a welter of crimson gore from a deep cut over his right ear. Hashknife sprang over and caught him as he sagged. Hashknife knocked Terrill spinning with his shoulder, and half dragged the old Chinese over to a couch, where he stretched him out.

"Water, Oklahomy," he ordered. "Cold water an' a towel."

The other three men stood there, staring drunkenly, not having any idea of what had happened. Hashknife turned to them.

"Go back to town an' sober up—all three of you," he said.

"Yeah, an' make it damn fast," added Oklahoma, coming in with the water and a towel.

"Well, I—I guess that's the best thing to do," agreed Skelton, partly sobered.

Ellis and Terrill followed him out, while Hashknife mopped the blood off Suey Ong's head and face. The old Chinese cook had been hit hard, but luckily the blow had been a glancing one; otherwise it would have crashed through his skull.

"Six-gun bar'l," said Oklahoma, and Hashknife nodded. They could hear the three men outside arguing.

"He'll be all right in a few minutes," said Hashknife.

Terrill came staggering back through the doorway.

"Where's our horsh an' buggy?" he demanded. "Who took'm?"

Hashknife and Oklahoma exchanged glances of understanding.

"Well, where's our horsh an' buggy?" demanded Terrill again. "I've done all the walkin' home I'm goin' t' do, I'll tell you that."

"Crawl then, damn you!" said Oklahoma. "We never touched your horse. I don't care whether you walk, crawl or roll—but you're goin' to git to hell off this place—fast."

Oklahoma strode over to a corner and picked up a shotgun.

"Thasall right," said Terrill. "Good night." He shut the door carefully behind him.

Oklahoma walked over to a window and watched the three figures fade out in the night, traveling in single file, heading for town.

Old Suey Ong was sitting up, holding his head in both hands, blinking his eyes at the light.

"Who hit you, pardner?" asked Hashknife.

"*No sabe.*"

Mojave came strolling in through the kitchen.

"Didn't you see the man who hit you?" asked Hashknife.

Suey Ong shook his head.

"No see. Head hu't velly bad jus' now."

"It's kinda funny about that Red Moon Valley," said Mojave. "Keeps runnin' through my head. Was that in Nevada?"

"Do you reckon they took the girl with 'em?" asked Oklahoma.

"No doubt in my mind that they did, Oklahomy. Suey Ong's all right now. Bandage up his head an' let him go to bed. I'm headin' for Gila Springs."

"Wouldn't that come under the head of kidnappin—takin' the girl?"

"You saw the law, didn't you? Strikes me that's a good answer. See you tomorrow."

"He didn't answer my question," complained Mojave.

"Aw, go to bed," growled Oklahoma. "Ain't there enough misery around here, 'thout you complainin' thataway?"

"Who came in the buggy?"

"An' they had to pick out the head of a good man to hit," sighed Oklahoma.

HASHKNIFE rode back to Gila Springs, where he found Speck Smalley and Sleepy playing pool in the Pima Saloon. They were anxious to hear whether the new sheriff, deputy and prosecuting attorney had been at the Bar M. The bartender had told them that the three men had started for the ranch, or at least had gone to get a conveyance.

In a few words Hashknife told them what he knew of the things that had happened. Hashknife had taken a short cut across the hills, and for that reason he did not know what progress the three walkers were making.

"I'm goin' to Pima City tonight, an' mebbe I'll meet 'em," said Speck.

"Will you do me a favor?" asked Hashknife.

"I shore will."

Hashknife found paper and a pencil.

"Take this telegram and have it sent right away, Speck; an' if you come back tomorrow, ask for an answer. Here's money to cover charges. The telegram read:

WARDEN STATE PENITENTIARY OF NEVADA

JIM MARSHALL WAS MY FRIEND AND I WANT YOU TO WIRE ME COMPLETE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF JOE CROSS ESCAPED CONVICT STOP CAN YOU MAIL ME PHOTOGRAPH OF JOE CROSS STOP RUSH DESCRIPTION PLEASE

—HASHKNIFE HARTLEY

"I'll wait until that answer shows up, Hashknife," promised Speck.

It was possibly thirty minutes after Hashknife and Sleepy had gone to the hotel when Buck Pearson and Faro Fleming came into the Pima Saloon.

Buck looked over those present and went to the bar with Faro.

"Well, that's a good job well done," said Buck. "Red Brant in jail, an' my daughter in good hands."

"Fannie will take care of her," said Faro as he poured out his drink. "That girl has got plenty spunk, Buck."

"Your sister?"

"No—your daughter."

"Oh."

"It's none of my damn business, Buck, but what are you going to do with her?"

"As you just said, it's none of your business, Faro. You didn't happen to have any real good ideas layin' around, didja?"

Faro smiled slowly.

"Not unless she should take a fancy to me, Buck."

"That ain't an idea."

"She's of age, isn't she?"

"Meanin' by that remark that I ain't got anythin' to say about who she marries, eh?"

Faro's greenish gray eyes narrowed a little as he replied:

"Exactly—and why should you? She doesn't even remember you, and it's a cinch you haven't contributed to her support or happiness in any way. She doesn't belong to you now, Buck. And as far as you having anything to say about who she marries, don't make me laugh."

"All right," said Buck. "I don't care a damn who she marries, as long as it ain't Red Brant. An' it won't be. He'll stay where he is until they take him out to hang him."

Buck turned and glanced around the

room. Turning back, he said to the bartender—

"Have you seen anythin' of Hartley's pardner around here?"

"They was both here awhile ago, with Speck Smalley."

"Yeah? The tall feller was here, eh?"

"Shore, he was here. Speck was goin' down to Pima City, an' Hartley wrote out a telegram for him to take down there. I heard him ask Speck to bring back the answer."

"Telegram, eh?" said Buck, scowling heavily at Faro. "Wonder who he sent a telegram to."

Faro did not know. He looked quizzically at Buck.

"Wasn't Hartley at the Bar M?" he asked.

"He was. Red Brant was in there with him, an' we didn't want to take too many chances. They had the chink watchin' from the rear of the house, so we had to sneak in an' cool him off first. One of the boys bent a gun over his head from behind an' thought he'd killed him, but I reckon a chink's skull is hard. We was down there tryin' to figure out what to do next, when out comes Red an' the girl, as nice as you please. It was made to order for us.

"They headed straight for the corral, so damn interested in each other that they never seen us at all." Buck laughed. "We had a gun jammed into each side of Red Brant, an' one of the boys wrapped a muffler around the girl's mouth. You never seen anythin' worked as slick as that. An' just about that time in drives Ellis, Skelton an' Terrill, all drunk. They left their horse an' buggy, which we swiped right away, an back we came to town. It couldn't have been planned any better."

Faro poured them each a big drink, which they downed.

"But suppose the girl decides not to stay here, Buck," suggested Fleming. "You can't very well prevent her from going away."

"Can't I?" said Buck. "I told her she'd either stay here or I'd put her in jail an' hold her as a material witness."

"That was a fatherly thing to do," said Faro.

"I'm running this country, Faro. But I wish I knew why Hartley came back from the Bar M an' sent a telegram. If I knew who he sent it to I might git a line on what it was about."

"Maybe it was about you kidnappin' the girl."

"Who in hell would he wire to about that?" demanded Buck. "An' as far as that's concerned, I didn't kidnap her. Anyway, she's my daughter."

"That's all right," soothed the gambler. "No matter what Hartley does, you can take care of yourself. Fan wondered if everything was all right, you know. She doesn't want you to get into any trouble. She's fond of you, Buck."

"I know she is." Buck nodded, somewhat mollified. "She's a great little woman. I'd like to hang a lot of diamonds on her. Mebbe I will."

Buck looked at his own reflection in the back bar mirror for several moments. A scowl slowly spread over his face and he turned to Faro.

"I wish I knew more about that telegram," he said.

"You might find out in Pima City."

"Yeah, I might. Why, shore I can—if I want to go down there. Well, I'll see you later; an' you might tell your sister not to worry, 'cause Buck Pearson can take care of himself. You tell her, will you?"

"I certainly will, Buck."

CHAPTER XII

CROSSED WIRES

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy were eating breakfast the next morning, when Buck Pearson rode in from the south. He stopped at the sheriff's office, where he had a talk with Ellis and Terrill. Presumably he gave them orders to let no one see Red Brant, because a little later they refused to let Hashknife see their prisoner.

"Any special reason why we can't see him?" asked Hashknife.

"Jist because you can't, thasall," replied Ellis.

"Orders from headquarters, eh?" Hashknife laughed. "Well, it's all right with me."

He and Sleepy went over to the Pima Saloon, and while they were over there, doing nothing, Red Brant was given his preliminary hearing. It was possibly irregular, the only evidence being a transcript of the coroner's inquest over the body of Tex Thorne; but the judge bound Red over to the superior court, charging him with first degree murder.

Fred Skelton, prosecuting attorney, brought the news when he came to get a drink of liquor.

"His case comes up day after tomorrow," stated Skelton.

"Do you want to call me as a State witness?" asked Hashknife.

"I don't know why in hell I should, Hartley."

"All right, I'll testify for the defense."

"Yes? An' what do you know to testify about?"

"Well, I can testify that the sheriff, deputy an' prosecutor are three drunken bums; incompetent, ignorant—catspaws of a man who thinks he's a king, when he's nothing but a dog eared deuce. I can testify to that—an' prove it."

Skelton was not without temper. His face flamed; his lips twisted trying to form words that refused to come.

Faro Fleming stepped in between them.

"Keep cool, Skelton," he said calmly, and turned to Hashknife. "If I were you I'd be careful of what I said, Hartley."

"Don't *you* start rockin' the boat, Fleming," warned Hashknife. "I've said these things to Skelton's face—an' I'll say 'em to Pearson's face. If we had decent law in this place, Buck Pearson would be facing a charge of kidnappin' right now. He's keepin' that girl against her will, an' you know it."

"So that's why you sent that telegram last night, eh?"

Hashknife's keen gray eyes searched Faro's face.

"So you knew about the telegram, eh? Is that why Buck rode in from Pima City this mornin'?"

Faro blinked and the tip of his tongue moistened his thin lips. He had not intended saying that; it was a bad slip of the tongue.

Hashknife laughed with his mouth, but there was no mirth in his eyes.

"Much obliged, Faro," he said slowly.

"I don't know a damn thing about where Buck has been."

"If it was a guessin' contest, you'd win."

Hashknife and Sleepy walked out, crossed the street and sat down in front of the hotel. They saw Buck come from the sheriff's office, go to the Pima Saloon, and in a few minutes he went back to the office.

"What's the answer to all this stuff?" asked Sleepy.

"I dunno." Hashknife grinned.

"Suppose they wire on a description of old Mojave, you can't have him arrested for killin' Marshall, 'cause Mojave wasn't down in Pima City that night. Even if he is Joe Cross, Joe Cross wasn't down there. An' if he had been, he'd never remember who Marshall was."

"I wouldn't be so danged sure about that part of it, Sleepy."

"You think he's fakin' loss of memory?"

"Hardly." Hashknife smiled, getting to his feet. "C'mon, I want to stretch my bronc's legs a little."

They went to the livery stable, where Hashknife changed his mind about Sleepy's going with him.

"You wait here for Smalley," he said. "Get that telegram, if he's got one for me, an' be sure and hang on to it."

Ten minutes after Hashknife left town Wes Ellis, the new sheriff, saddled his horse and rode in the same direction—south. Sleepy did not know that Buck Pearson had told Ellis to trail Hashknife and see what he did. Terrill came over and joined Sleepy, anxious to find out if he knew where Hashknife was going; but he learned nothing.

Hashknife rode beyond the turnoff to the Bar M and over to where they had found the body of Mica Miller. For a long time he sat there in plain view, sizing up the situation. Ellis, farther back on the road, watched him anxiously. Finally Hashknife rode down to where he had lost the man's tracks that day, and dismounted, while Ellis trailed in on the top of the little arroyo.

He saw Hashknife moving down the slope, leading his horse and apparently searching the ground. At this point Ellis was unable to follow and still remain concealed; so he strained his eyes in the bright sunlight and tried to see what Hashknife was doing.

It seemed to him that the tall cowboy was trying to track something or somebody—and he was right in his surmise; Hashknife was trying to track the man who had carried away the money box that had disappeared from the wrecked stagecoach. Far down the slope and almost due west of the Bar M was a strip of willows, and near this willow patch Hashknife found tracks—heavy heel tracks, as though the maker had carried a load.

Again he found them in the little wash, very plain; and then he found the box! It had been buried in the sand, but a cow had slipped on the smooth metal and uncovered a few inches of it. Quickly he dug it loose and lifted it from the sand. The padlock was intact but, judging from the scratches, some one had been trying to open it without a key.

He squatted on his heels and considered the box. Suddenly a voice snapped:

"Don't move, damn you! Don't move, or I'll kill you."

It was Wes Ellis, the sheriff, and Hashknife realized from the sound of his voice that Ellis was frightened at what he was doing.

"Stand up an' turn around, Hartley. Hold your hands away from you."

Hashknife stood up and turned around. Ellis was only a dozen feet away, holding a six-shooter, which insisted on wobbling around. He licked his lips, his eyes wide from the strain.

"So you—you stole that money box, eh?" Ellis said hoarsely.

But Hashknife did not answer him. He was staring past the sheriff, wide eyed, mouth open.

"Don't shoot—it's the sheriff!" he snapped.

THE TRICK was as old as the oldest of gunmen, but it worked. Ellis whirled like a trapped coyote. There was the sharp crack of a six-shooter, and the sheriff's gun jumped several feet away, while the sheriff flung his right arm up, hand numbed, trigger finger out of commission.

"You're a hell of a sheriff for Arizona," said Hashknife calmly. Ellis was as white as paper.

"You ain't hurt much," said the tall cowboy. "I aimed to ruin you for future shootin' with that right hand, but I pulled a little too far to the right. Oh, it's all right—I ain't bloodthirsty."

"You—you can't interfere with a officer," panted Ellis, badly shaken.

"I know it,"—dryly, picking up the sheriff's gun. "C'mon."

"Don't try to order me, Hartley."

"Listen," said Hashknife evenly. "You'll do as I tell you, Ellis, or I'll knock your ears down. Buck Pearson ain't here to help you now."

"You'll pay for this, I'll tell you that much."

"When I owe a debt, I pay it, Sheriff. Get goin'."

Oklahoma, Mojave and Suey Ong looked blankly at Hashknife and Ellis, as Hashknife ordered the sheriff to dismount at the Bar M.

"Howdy, gents." Hashknife smiled. "Nice day. Suey Ong, will you git some warm water and a bandage and fix up the sheriff's hand."

"Can do velly nice," bobbed Suey Ong, who looked like a Turk with his bandaged head.

"Just about what in hell has been goin' on?" queried Oklahoma.

"New sheriff got baptized." Hashknife said.

"Yeah, an' you'll pay for the baptizin', Hartley," snarled Ellis.

Oklahoma looked anxiously at Hashknife, who did not seem to be greatly worried.

"Anythin' I can do?" asked Oklahoma.

"Plenty," replied Hashknife. "Have you got some place where you can tie this here codfish up for a day or so?"

"The sheriff?"

"Yeah, that's his title."

"Why, I—I dunno. Mebbe it can be done."

"Nobody knows he's here. You see they kidnapped Red an' Lorna; so we'll even it up a little by takin' their alleged sheriff."

"Didja see Red?"

"No, they won't let anybody see him, but they had his hearin' in private this mornin' an' charged him with first degree murder."

"The hell they did! Where's Lorna?"

"I don't know, unless she's held at the HP."

"She ain't," said the sheriff. "An' if you damn thieves try to tie me up, I'll—"

"Mojave, go down an' git plenty ropes. Bring that *maguey* one, too. I know a little cellar under this house that'll jist fit a sheriff."

"I'll send you all to the penitentiary for this, Oklahomy."

"I'm gittin' old an' a permanent address won't hurt me none."

HASHKNIFE met Speck Smalley, when he reached the main road, and the ex-deputy had the telegram. It read:

JOE CROSS CAPTURED AND NOW IN PRISON MARSHALL PROBABLY KILLED BY SOME EX-CONVICT FURTHER INVESTIGATION USELESS

—CRAYDON—WARDEN

Hashknife shifted in his saddle, hooked one leg around the horn and proceeded to roll a cigaret.

"Do you know anythin' new?" asked Speck.

Hashknife told him about the preliminary hearing, and Speck grunted disgustedly.

"They're railroadin' fast," he said.

Hashknife nodded and shifted back into his saddle.

"You'll find Sleepy in town, Speck. Tell him I've gone to Pima City, but will be back tonight."

Hashknife read the telegram again before putting it in his pocket. It had upset all his calculations; ruined every theory. But Hashknife was unconvinced. It was reasonable to suppose that Marshall might have met an ex-convict in Pima City. There are men who hold a grudge against the men who guard and guide their prison days. If Joe Cross was back in prison, it was merely a coincidence that old Mojave seemed to fit his description.

It was late in the afternoon when Hashknife reached Pima City and stabled his horse. He ate a meal in a restaurant and wandered around the main street until he found an old swamper from one of the saloons, sunning himself against a building. The old fellow was frowsy, unkempt, but knew everybody in town and everything about the town.

"Yeah, I know Buck Pearson," he said. "Ort to know him. Owns pretty much all of Pima Valley. Biggest man we've got around here."

"Don't own anythin' here in Pima City, does he?" asked Hashknife.

"Owns the stage station, he does. Ginerally considered a big man."

"If he didn't like anybody around here, he could make it tough for 'em, eh?"

"Well, I'd tell a man! Yessir, he's powerful."

Hashknife smiled and wondered what Buck would do when his sheriff didn't come back. He gave the old swamper a quarter to buy a drink, and sauntered up to the little railroad station. He entered the office and leaned on the counter which separated the public from the agent.

The combination depot agent, express agent, baggage master and telegraph operator was a thin faced, thin haired individual, one side of his mouth sagging

from the weight of a corncob pipe. His weak eyes were shaded by a strip of cardboard held in place by a rubber band.

He glanced back at Hashknife, one long, bony hand on the telegraph key. He took plenty of time to copy some train orders. Finally he yawned, stretched wearily, got to his feet and shuffled back to Hashknife, who was leaning across the counter, smiling.

"Are you the telegraph operator?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah."

"Read Morse all right, eh?"

"Huh? Why not; that's my business."

"All right." Hashknife's smile faded, and his lips drew down to a thin line as he placed the telegram on the counter top, face up.

"Why didn't you copy this telegram right?"

The agent's eyes snapped wide, his pipe jiggled nervously, but by a supreme effort he managed to shut his teeth.

"Why—uh—" He looked up at Hashknife, sagging back at the expression on the face of this tall cowboy.

"Why didn't you?" gritted Hashknife. "You made me come clear down here for a correct copy, an' I'm goin' to git it, if I have to shoot it out of your mangy hide. Don't talk back to me!"

"Well—uh—my God, don't—"

There was a dull thump, and a blued Colt rested on the top of the counter, the unwavering muzzle pointed at the agent's Adam's apple.

"Give me that correct copy!" Hashknife's voice was brittle. "Give it to me, or you'll never live to copy another!"

The man sagged. The pipe fell to the floor unnoticed. His eyes were full of tears.

"You — uh — uh — see, I — I — well, I'll—"

"You made a copy—an imprint," said Hashknife. "Give me that book over there in the press."

The man fairly staggered over to the press, expecting any moment to get a bullet in his spine. Stumbling back, he placed the thick book of flimsy tissue on the counter. The telegrams were written in indelible ink, and later transferred to the flimsy with the aid of damp cloth and heavy pressure.

"Copy it on a blank," ordered Hashknife, "an' don't forget that I'm watchin' you."

The agent steadied his nerves and wrote swiftly. Anything to get rid of this man whose eyes spelled murder. It was finished now. Hashknife folded it up and put it in his pocket. Slowly he holstered his gun and stepped over to the door.

"I don't know how much you got paid for your crooked work, but you might as well keep the money."

The agent shook his head, sighed deeply and leaned against the counter.

"*Adios.*" Hashknife grinned, and closed the door behind him.

Hashknife went straight to the livery stable, saddled his horse and headed back for Gila Springs. The telegram read:

> JOE CROSS AGE FORTY-FIVE LOOKS SIXTY-FIVE WEIGHT ABOUT ONE FORTY HAIR GRAY EYES BLUE DEEP SCAR ACROSS FACE FROM CHEEK TO CHEEK AND NOSE SCORED AND OUT OF LINE FROM SAME BULLET STOP BULLET SCAR ON RIGHT SHOULDER FORMS AN X IN FRONT STOP BULLET SCAR THROUGH LEFT LEG MIDWAY OF CALF STOP ALSO OLDER SCAR ABOUT SECOND RIB FROM BOTTOM ON LEFT SIDE FRONT AND BACK CAUSED FROM BULLET AT TIME OF ORIGINAL CAPTURE STOP HIS MEMORY VERY BAD MILD TEMPERED AND HARMLESS STOP ANY INFORMATION WILL BE APPRECIATED
>
> —GRAYDON—WARDEN

Hashknife read it through several times, his brow furrowed in deep thought.

"That is shore a puzzler," he told his horse. "I almost git a fine idea, an' then somethin' ruins it. But this telegram is the key to somethin', or they wouldn't have faked the other one."

He put the telegram in his pocket and grinned thoughtfully.

"If that telegraph agent had only

known I was bluffin', that I didn't have any evidence that a faked telegram had been made out! It shore pays to own a mean look and a reliable hunch."

AS A PRECAUTION, Hashknife went back to that money box in the dark and changed its location. Then he rode over to the Bar M, where Oklahoma met him with a wide grin.

"Ab Terrill was out here," he told Hashknife. "Asked if we'd seen anythin' of the sheriff or you, an' I said you'd been here, but left. I had a darn good notion to knock him down an' add him to the collection, but I wasn't sure you needed him."

"I don't reckon we need him." Hashknife smiled.

Old Mojave listened with little interest, sucking on his old pipe.

"How are you, Mojave?" asked Hashknife pleasantly.

"Fine; how 'r' you?"

"Good. Will you do me a favor?"

"Eh? Favor? What do you mean?"

"Strip off your shirt."

Mojave and Oklahoma looked blankly at Hashknife.

"Well," grunted Mojave, "that's damn funny."

"Take it off!" snapped Oklahoma. "He asked you, didn't he?"

Mojave mumbled something under his breath, but stripped off the shirt.

On his right shoulder, just below the curve of his collarbone, was the distinct X of an old scar. Hashknife knelt down and drew up the old man's left overall leg. There was the scar of an old bullet hole, which had bored through the calf.

"That there old *hombre* has been shot at, ain't he?" marveled Oklahoma.

"Yeah, an' they come pretty close." Hashknife smiled as he turned old Mojave around, examining his body closely.

"Thank you, pardner," he said, handing the shirt back to Mojave.

"You're welcome. Didn't find any, didja?"

"Any what?"

"What you was lookin' for."

"No, I didn't." Hashknife laughed.

"Good. I had 'em once, I 'member that."

"Up in Nevada—Red Moon Valley?"

"I'll be darned! Red Moon Valley. That's up in Nevada, ain't it?"

"Somewhere up there, Mojave. Well, I've got to be movin', but I'll see you later."

"Make it soon," said Oklahoma. "Do you reckon I could git to see Red if I went to town, Hashknife?"

"I'm afraid not. Take it easy. Red's all right for awhile."

But Hashknife left the road and cut through the hills. He was taking no chances on any one who might wait for him to ride back from Pima City. He found Sleepy and Speck together in the Pima Saloon.

"You ain't seen Wes Ellis, have you?" queried Speck.

"You don't mean to say the sheriff's lost, do you?"

"There's been inquiries about him."

"Who?"

"Ab Terrill an' Fred Skelton."

"Why would I know where he is?" Hashknife laughed.

"Because," replied Smalley, "Ab Terrill told me that Ellis went out to trail you this afternoon. I reckon they was curious to know where you went."

"You mean Buck Pearson was."

"Yeah, that's right. I found out tha' Buck's daughter is stayin' with Mrs. De Lacey."

"Mrs. De Lacey?"

"Faro Fleming's sister."

"Oh! Then she ain't at the HP ranch."

"Nope. I reckon Buck will marry the merry widder. Anyway, that's what folks say, an' he's up there quite a lot. Me an' Sleepy tried again to see Red Brant, but they wouldn't let us in."

"Well—" Hashknife yawned—"I reckon I'll roll up a bunch of shut-eye. See you *mañana*, Speck. Oh, say—nobody asked you about that telegram, did they?"

"Nope. Was everythin' all right, Hashknife?"

"It wasn't — but it is now, thank you."

As Hashknife and Sleepy started across the street to the hotel they saw a rider dash up to the sheriff's office. It was Wes Ellis, hatless, gunless, riding a bareback horse with a rope hackamore.

"The son of a buck got loose!" snorted Hashknife. "Hell's to pay an' I ain't had time to heat the pitch. C'mon, pardner, there's a job to be done."

CHAPTER XIII

THE KING PASSES

LORNA realized that she was virtually a prisoner at the Fleming home, but she was making the best of things, fearing that her father might make good his threat to put her in jail. Fanny De Lacey had questioned her closely regarding her reasons for seeking her father, but Lorna was close mouthed.

She had heard a conversation between Faro Fleming and his sister which proved to her that Fanny De Lacey wanted to get a chance to handle some of Buck Pearson's money. The conversation proved that Mrs. De Lacey came there for the sole purpose of marrying Buck for his money.

That fact did not worry or annoy Lorna. Buck Pearson could do as he pleased with his money or affections. All Lorna wanted was to get away from him—and to help Red Brant.

Mrs. De Lacey had gone to do some shopping for dinner, and Lorna was alone in the house when Faro Fleming came. It was at least an hour before his regular time, and Lorna realized that he had been drinking.

"Your sister isn't back from shopping," said Lorna, thinking perhaps he had come to see her about something.

Faro laughed.

"I'm not interested in Fanny; I'm interested in you, Lorna. I saw Fanny down on the street; so I got another man to sit in on my job while I came up to keep you from getting lonesome."

"I don't quite understand your interest in me," said Lorna, getting to her feet. "And as far as being lonesome—"

"You don't understand my interest? Don't you know you are beautiful, graceful, the most wonderful girl I have ever met?"

Faro came closer, holding out his hands toward her.

"Lorna, I want you. I've wanted you every minute since the first time I saw you. Don't run away; I won't hurt you. I had to come up here and tell you this."

Lorna was a little frightened and backed away.

"Please don't," she begged. "You must not say things like that to me, Mr. Fleming."

"Must not?" Faro laughed huskily. "Lorna, don't you understand that I love you—want you? Yes, I want you more than anything in the world."

Lorna was backed against the wall, her face white.

"Don't touch me," she warned him. "I do not love you, and you have no right to take advantage of me this way. Oh what kind of people live in this country, anyway? Cowards, gun fighters—"

"And red headed killers," added Faro harshly. The blood had drained from his face and the old poker expression had returned.

"At least he is a gentleman," said Lorna.

Faro laughed huskily and came closer to her.

"You love Red Brant, eh? Fell for a damn ignorant, gun packing cowpuncher. God gave you beauty, but no brains. A lot of help Red will be to you, Lorna, when this new found father of yours gets through with him—that makes you flinch, eh? How about making a trade, sister? I've got influence with Buck. I want you. Red wants a chance to get out of the country. How about a trade on that basis?"

"I never knew any man could be such a cheap coward," she replied evenly.

"Nothing cheap about that. I get my money's worth, and I'm sure Red would jump at the chance to get away. He's no hero, Lorna; don't you ever think it."

Lorna looked Faro over coldly.

"What could you do to get Buck Pearson to allow Red Brant to escape?" she asked.

"Do you think I'd stop at anything, if you'd agree?"

"And your sister intends to marry him."

Faro laughed shortly.

"Never mind Fan. How about it—is it a trade?"

But before Lorna could frame an answer Mrs. De Lacey came back, her arms filled with packages. She looked curiously at Faro and Lorna for a moment and laughed easily.

"Sorry to interrupt a love scene," she said. "Just a moment and I'll be out in the kitchen with my pots and pans."

"Don't go," replied Lorna. "It was not a love scene, Mrs. De Lacey."

"No? Well, well! My eyesight must be getting bad."

"Nearly as bad as your morals," said Lorna, speaking her thoughts aloud. Fanny De Lacey whirled around, her eyes flashing.

"What do you know about my morals?" she demanded hotly.

Faro laughed nastily and sat down in a rocker. Mrs. De Lacey went over close to Lorna.

"Answer me," she said evenly. "What do you know about my morals?"

"Suppose I refuse to answer?"

"I'd choke it out of you."

"Go easy, Fan," advised Faro. "No use stirring up a mess."

"Mind your own business! No one can say anything about my morals—and not have to prove the insinuation. I'm listening, *Miss Pearson.*"

"All right. What was your name before you became Mrs. De Lacey? It was not Fleming."

Mrs. De Lacey jerked back quickly. She looked at Faro, whose frozen face was twisted in amazement, and then turned back to Lorna.

"What do you know about it?" she demanded huskily.

"I know you are not Faro Fleming's sister, that you are not any relation, you two. You were Faro Fleming's sweetheart, before your marriage, but you quarreled. I know you were a female gambler, and I know you came here to marry Buck Pearson's money. Have you any morals left now?"

FANNY DE LACEY was not pretty now. Her face was twisted bitterly, her nails digging into the palms of her tiny hands. Faro was on his feet, his lips drawn back in a snarling grin.

"Who told you that?" he demanded huskily. "You tell me, or I'll choke it out of you."

"You did," replied Lorna simply. "Both of you."

"You're crazy," breathed Faro.

"Am I? Those walls are thin, and all those cocktails—I believe you call them—caused you to talk of bygone days—and I listened."

"You dirty little sneak!" cried Mrs. De Lacey. She tried to strike Lorna in the face, but Faro caught her arm.

"Go easy, Fan," he advised.

"Go easy—hell! Do you think I'm going to let this damn little spy go and blab to Buck Pearson? Do you think I'm going to vegetate in this godforsaken end of the earth, making a play for big money, and then let a baby faced doll like this call a crooked deal on me?"

"Don't be a fool, Fan; use your brains. Buck is liable to be here any moment. Do you want him to run in on this?"

Mrs. De Lacey stepped back.

"Tell him not to come. I don't want him up here now. We've got to have more time, Faro. For heaven's sake, go down and stop him!"

But it was too late. Buck's knock sounded on the front door, and the two looked helplessly at each other. Faro recovered first. A slim automatic slid

into his hand and he shoved it close to Lorna.

"Back into your room," he whispered. "Stay there. Tell us you don't want any supper. Honest to God, if you come out, there will be a killing. You have driven us into a corner, and we won't stop at anything. Back in!"

Lorna was forced to obey, and Faro shut the door softly. Mrs. De Lacey had hurried to the kitchen, and Faro, after a moment, went calmly to the door and admitted Buck.

"I thought I heard a knock." He smiled. "Fanny was making so much noise in the kitchen that I wasn't certain it was a knock. How is everything?"

"Fine as frog hair."

Fanny came to the door, forcing a smile.

"Hello there," laughed Buck. "How's the cook?"

"Pretty good."

"Turn it around; good and pretty."

"Thank you," she said, smiling. "I'm afraid your Majesty will have to wait awhile, as supper is just on the stove."

"Suits me fine, Fanny. How about a little drink, Faro?"

They drank a health to Fanny and sat down together.

"How's Lorna?" queried Buck softly.

Faro stretched his legs comfortably.

"Rather headstrong, Buck."

"Yea-a-ah?"

"Oh, I suppose she resents having to stay here. Fanny told her you were coming up for supper, and she said she would not be at the table."

Buck laughed and lighted a cigar.

"Suits me," he said, and Faro drew a sigh of satisfaction.

"I reckon I'm not much of a father—" Buck grinned—"but I'm not a bit worried over it. Everything else is breakin' right for me at last. Just one more thing I want to top it off, Faro."

Buck smiled and motioned toward the kitchen.

"Well, I'm not putting anything in your road, Buck," said Faro.

"I know you ain't, Faro, an' I appreciate it. I'll make it all right with you. You play the game with Buck Pearson an' you can't lose."

"I like to play with the big men and big money, Buck."

"That's the right thing. I'm not through. Bossin' Pima Valley is only a start for me. I need good men around me, Faro; men who will do the right thing for me."

"How about another drink?"

"Trot it out. Does Fanny ever take anythin'?"

"Not a drop, Buck."

"Good! Liquor was made for men—not women."

"That's my idea, Buck."

They drank their liquor and sat down to talk, while Fanny, her brain still working at top speed, tried to cook a good supper. She swore at herself inwardly for drinking too many cocktails with Faro, and forgetting that Lorna might overhear their drunken reminiscences. And for this to happen just when she felt certain Buck was about to propose! Even if he found out some of it after their marriage, she could force him to make a handsome settlement. Fanny De Lacey was a gold-digger and the paydirt was in sight.

When the supper was on the table Faro walked over and opened Lorna's door.

"Are you coming to supper, Lorna?" he asked.

"No," she replied.

Buck merely laughed and said—

"A little starvation might not hurt her."

Buck did not notice the preoccupied expression on Fanny's face, the smile she forced to her lips when he looked at her. Faro was natural. Perhaps the liquor had steadied his nerves. As soon as possible after supper he excused himself. It was time for him to be back on shift. Buck was secretly glad, because he wanted the charming widow to himself.

He lighted a fresh cigar and settled back comfortably on a sofa, waiting for Fanny to clear away the table. Buck was seeing the world through a rosy tint. Just enough liquor, enough food, a good cigar and the prospect of a confidential

chat with the prettiest woman he had ever known.

Fanny came back and sat down beside him on the sofa.

"I've just been thinkin' that you haven't had a chance to form a very good opinion of Arizona," he said. "You got here just at the same time that trouble came along. But everything is fixed now."

Fanny's eyes strayed to Lorna's door. Everything fixed! She wished it was.

"You ain't worryin' about somethin', are you, Fanny?" he asked.

"Oh, no—no."

"That cookin' was too hard for you."

"Oh, not at all; it was a pleasure. Do you think they will hang Red Brant?"

"You bet they'll hang him." Buck laughed. "That's all fixed."

"How do you mean it is fixed, Buck?"

"Would any jury in Pima Valley find him innocent? An' the judge is a friend of mine."

"Does Mr. Skelton know anything about law?"

Buck laughed and shifted comfortably.

"No, I don't reckon he does, my dear; but enough. We don't need much law around here."

He got up and came over closer to her.

"But, Fanny, I—there are other things I want to talk about. Ever since that first mornin' I saw you, I've—"

THE CLATTER of running feet on the porch interrupted Buck's proposal. The door was flung violently open, and in came Wes Ellis, the sheriff. His face and clothes were dirty, the bandage on his right hand unwrapped and flying. He stopped short, panting heavily.

"They captured me, but I dug out!" he blurted. "They had me in the cellar, an' —" Ellis stopped to catch his breath. Buck stepped over and grasped him by the arm.

"Get hold of yourself, Wes! Who captured you?"

"Hartley! Buck, he had that money box. I sneaked in on him an' got the drop, but he shot my gun out of my hand Damn him, he's smart! He took me to the Bar M an' had old Oklahomy lock me in the cellar. But I got loose."

Ellis leaned on the table and panted wearily.

"I—I caught a horse an' came in bareback."

Buck reached under the table and picked up his belt and gun.

"The first thing to do is to get Hartley an' his pardner, Wes. Where is Terrill?"

"Down at the office. Buzz an' Ralston are in the saloon. Hartley an' Stevens have gone to bed."

"Good! Now, we'll mop up on them two, an' later we'll go an' git Oklahomy, the dirty old sidewinder."

Buck stepped to a cabinet and took out a bottle and glasses.

"I reckon you need a bracer, Wes. No hurry. Take a drink an' set down until you're able to breathe good again."

Lorna had not gone to bed. She heard Wes Ellis come in and heard what he said, but she did not know what it all meant. However, she liked Hashknife and Sleepy, and if Oklahoma was mixed up in the deal with them, she believed it was something concerning Red Brant. Ellis had said that Hashknife and Sleepy had gone to bed at the hotel.

Lorna acted quickly. The window was only a few feet above the ground and, before Buck and Ellis departed by the front door, Lorna was running down toward the main street. As soon as the men left, Fanny De Lacey, armed with an automatic belonging to Faro, flung open Lorna's door.

Realizing instantly that Lorna had heard what was said and had gone to tell somebody—perhaps Hartley and Stevens —Fanny flung a shawl around her shoulders and went running down toward the saloon, intending to warn Buck.

Buck Pearson lost no time. He picked up Buzz Brown and Jack Ralston at the Pima Saloon, secured a gun for Ellis, and the four of them went across to the hotel. Wes Ellis wanted to add Terrill

to their party but Buck said that four of them was enough to do the job nicely.

The old proprietor of the hotel was standing at the bottom of the steps, scratching his head, slightly perplexed over the fact that a girl had gone running up the stairs after asking which room Hartley was in. Now, here were four men, charging the stairs.

"What room is Hartley in?" snapped Buck.

"Sis-sis-sixteen," stammered the old man.

The four men crowded swiftly up the stairs and into the hall.

"Take that end of the hall, Buzz," whispered Buck. "Block 'em if they try to go that way."

Buzz tiptoed past Hashknife and Sleepy's door in the poorly lighted hall.

"There's a light in their room," whispered Ellis.

"Give me room to smash that lock, an' both of you foller me in. Don't be afraid to shoot," said Buck.

Buck leaned against the opposite wall and fairly flung himself across the narrow hall, striking the door a terrific blow with his shoulder. The lock snapped off short, and Buck went clear across the room, landing on his hands and knees against the opposite side of the room. The crash fairly shook the whole building.

Ellis and Ralston were right behind him, cocked revolvers in their hands. Standing near the middle of the room, looking at them wide eyed, was Lorna. Except for her, the three attackers were the only occupants. Buck got slowly to his feet, puffing the wind into his tortured lungs, staring at her malevolently.

"You!" he panted. "What 'r' you doin' here? Can'tcha talk?"

"She came here to warn 'em away," said Ellis wearily.

Buck grasped her by the arm, but she tore away from him.

"Don't you touch me," she warned him. "You haven't any right—"

"Right? You little fool, I could send you to jail for this! Don't you realize you've warned a thief? What in hell is the matter with you? Are you crazy?"

"Where did they go?" asked Ellis. Lorna shook her head.

"They were not here," she said evenly.

"Not here?" Buck came closer, peering into her face. Blood was dripping from a cut on his cheek where he had come in contact with the windowsill.

"No, they were not here," she repeated. "I came to warn them, but they were not here."

"All right, we'll get 'em. Come on with us. We'll see that you don't get another chance to warn 'em."

He grasped her arm in a vise-like grip and fairly shoved her ahead of him. Lorna's face was white, but her lips were shut tightly as they came down the stairs. Just outside the doorway they ran into Oklahoma and Mojave. They had discovered the escape of Ellis and were coming to tell Hashknife; but Buck's three assistants shoved guns against both of the old men and quickly disarmed Oklahoma.

"Good work!" snapped Buck. "Saves goin' after 'em. Go over to the saloon."

Buck took Lorna right with him, shoved her through the door of the saloon, into an interested group. Fanny De Lacey was there. She had come in through the rear door, and Faro had told her that the four men had gone over to the hotel.

Skelton was there, half drunk, as usual. The room buzzed with excitement as Buck shoved Lorna up close to the bar.

"Hang on to her, will you, Faro?" he asked. "Don't let her get away."

"An' what has the lady done?" asked Skelton.

"None of your damn business!" Buck said angrily. "Now, we've got to locate Hartley an' Stevens. They've got that ten thousand dollars, stolen money, an' they kidnapped Ellis today. Let's clean up the both of 'em. Listen, I'll give a thousand—"

Buck stopped, his eyes wide. Ab Terrill staggered in, one eye swollen shut, upper lip badly cut, his jaw swollen. Ellis grasped him by the arm to steady him.

"What happened?" asked Buck hoarsely.

"Brant gone," said Terrill weakly. "Hartley—"

"What did Hartley do?" demanded Buck.

"Let Brant loose," choked Terrill. "Knocked me out and took the keys. How that man can hit! Look at my eye, will you?"

Buck whirled on the crowd.

"Men, we've got a job to do tonight. If Hartley an' Stevens are here, we'll hang the pair of 'em. I'll give one thousand cold dollars to the man—"

"To what man, Pearson?"

NO ONE SAW Hashknife come through that door, but there he was. And on each side of him was a man—Sleepy Stevens and Red Brant. Both of these men were grinning, but without mirth. Red's eyes shifted to Faro, whose hand was on Lorna's arm.

"Take your hand off her, Faro," said Red evenly, and the gambler's hand dropped limply. Neither of the three men had drawn a gun, but it seemed as if every one in that crowd knew that the slightest move would make a hell of the Pima Saloon.

Hashknife moved slowly forward, hunched a little, right elbow crooked and tensed. His lean face was not smiling now; it was tight and drawn, eyes nearly closed, his mouth a penciled line. He was looking at Buck. Then he spoke in an even, flat voice—a monotone as cold as ice.

"One thousand cold dollars ain't much, Pearson," he said. "Not when it would seal my lips. I don't mind tellin' you that I got the correct message from that agent in Pima City. He turned yaller, Buck."

"I don't know what you mean," said Buck huskily.

"Yes, you do, Buck. You wanted to close that case. Why, you're so crooked you'd steal from yourself. Yes, you did. Don'tcha remember you an' Tex Thorne takin' that treasure box from the stage? No? You wanted to plant it on Red Brant, didn't you? But first you wanted to open it an' take out the money that night, but old Mojave drove Mica Miller almost into you, an' you had to—or thought you had to kill Miller."

"That's a damn lie," whispered Buck, licking his lips. "Me an' Tex never had anythin' to do with that."

"Mojave hid it," continued Hashknife, "an' I found it today."

"Tryin' to alibi yourself, eh?" snarled Buck. "Well, I'll tell you—"

"An' you thought Tex doublecrossed you an' took it, didn't you? So you shot him, Buck; an' lucky for you, you was able to blame the killin' on Red Brant."

"Rotten lies," whispered Buck. "You're tryin' to save yourself an'—"

"An' then, Buck—" Hashknife's voice carried a cutting edge—"you met Jim Marshall in Pima City. I know what he said. Want me to tell 'em?

"He said, 'Joe Cross!' "

Buck's poise was broken; his nerve snapped. He was fast with a gun, faster than the average man, but he was not facing an average man. His gun was out, but the muzzle was never lifted. Twice it went off, the bullets hitting the floor between himself and the tall, gray faced man who was shooting from the hip.

Buck stumbled, tried to brace himself, tried to lift his gun; but he sagged forward and came sprawling. No one offered to assist him. The crowd seemed stunned at what had happened and, when they realized that the shooting was all over, the three men near the doorway were covering the crowd with their guns.

"Best dern shootin' I've seen in a long time," said Oklahoma, and his voice fairly boomed in the silence. "I knowed Buck was goin' to run against a snag some day. Gimme my gun, Brown. I may need it."

Brown gave him the gun willingly. Old Mojave looked blankly at Buck, then up at Hashknife.

"Joe Cross?" he said. "Hell, I 'member that's what they called me."

"Your name's Pearson!" snapped Hashknife. "Harold Pearson!"

"I'll betcha it is. I've allus wondered how his name could be—"

"You never no such a thing," interrupted Oklahoma. "You—"

Buck was trying to sit up, and Ellis, white faced, tremblingly helped him.

"It's all right," panted Buck. "I—I thought everythin' was right, an' it was all wrong. Not much time now. *Poco tiempo*, as the Mexican says. Hartley's right. I'm Joe Cross. I—I didn't know old Mojave was Pearson. I broke prison—hidin' close. Needed other clothes—an' I saw this man in swimmin'. I—I—" Buck panted for breath. "I didn't mean for him to take my place; I wanted his clothes. The rest was a bad break for him. I found those recorded papers in his pocket, after I saw the guards shoot him down. I thought they'd killed him, shot him up so they'd never know it wasn't Joe Cross. I took his mine. I—"

Buck sagged down and some one shoved a blanket under his head. Red crossed to Lorna and took her by the arm.

"He wasn't your father, Lorna," said Red huskily. "Don't you see?"

Lorna nodded wonderingly, looking at Old Mojave.

"Mojave!" snapped Oklahoma. "You've got a daughter."

The old man's shoulders straightened as he looked at her, and tears started in his tired eyes as she came over and took his hands.

"I kinda remember havin' one," he said huskily. "Huh—how are you?"

"Remember?" snorted Oklahoma, his lips quivering. "I hope this is one time he ain't lyin'."

THE TENSION was broken. While two of the men ran to get a doctor, others placed Buck on the pool table. Skelton, shocked sober, came to Hashknife, pawing at his arm.

"This is all true?" he asked wonderingly. "Buck Pearson—he done all the killing? He—he wasn't Pearson at all? Who is Joe Cross? I don't understand what it is all about."

Ellis crowded in, pasty faced, unable to do more than goggle around.

"You ought to resign," Hashknife told him. "You ain't fit to be the sheriff, Ellis."

"I know it," gulped Ellis. "But Buck said—"

But Hashknife moved away to where Red and Lorna were looking at each other. Mrs. De Lacey had sat down in a chair, staring at the floor, and Faro was patting her on the shoulder. Her dream of being the wife of a millionaire had been shattered in the smoke of a .45.

Charley Bass came to Hashknife's elbow.

"It seems to me that old Mojave is entitled to everything belonging to Buck," he said. "If Joe Cross beat him out of that mine, I suppose he can prove he isn't Joe Cross, can't he? I mean Mojave."

Hashknife walked over to the pool table where the doctor had stripped off Buck's shirt. He looked at Hashknife and shook his head, as the tall cowboy examined Buck's left side. They were all watching Hashknife, as he looked up at them, his expression gravely triumphant.

"This man is Joe Cross," he said slowly. "He was shot an' captured quite a good many years ago an' put in the Nevada prison. Later he escaped. I got some of the story from Jim Marshall, the man Buck killed in Pima City. The guards caught Joe Cross in swimmin'—mebbe just dressin' from his swim—an' they shot him down, ruining his face an' shooting him twice more. No one questioned his identity. His mind was a blank an'—"

"That's true!" Old Mojave's voice was high pitched, excited, as he shoved to the front. "We fought—this man an' me—in the mud. He—I don't know why now. I 'member he knocked me out, an' I 'member them striped clothes—"

"Remember your mine in Red Moon

Valley?" asked Hashknife. "You just had it recorded, Mojave."

"Why, I've got the paper—" Mojave began searching his pockets. "No, I—I —oh, yeah, that was—"

"I don't think we'll have much trouble in getting the real Pearson his inheritance," said Charley Bass gravely.

"Gward!" said Oklahoma piously, looking at Mojave. "All I hope is that he don't try to be a cattle king. Mojave! You danged old pelican, why don'tcha go an' shake hands with your daughter?"

Oklahoma turned to Lorna.

"You ain't figgerin' on goin' East, are you?" he asked.

Lorna's eyes were misty with tears, and there was a catch in her voice as she replied—

"Oklahomy, I ain't figgerin' on—on goin' anywhere."

Hashknife touched Ellis on the arm.

"That money box is cached just above where you saw it, Ellis. Under the overhang of the bank."

Ellis nodded foolishly and held out his hand.

"Thank you for shootin' that gun out of my hand, Hartley. I didn't know I was on the wrong side."

Ten minutes later, while Gila Springs searched for Hashknife and his partner, the two cowboys were drifting down the road which leads to Pima City; riding quietly along under the Arizona stars. They did not want to be thanked for what they had done. It was all in a day's work, and they were moving on, following the finger of fate.

"Fate's a funny thing, pardner," said Hashknife, as they drifted past the spot where the stage had been wrecked. "Except for a drunken stage driver, Buck Pearson would never have been found out. One wheel off the edge of a grade—an' the luck of a cattle king was busted. But it's the first time I ever knew of a fifteen year bullet scar to kill a man."

"How did it kill him, Hashknife?"

"Because old Mojave didn't have it, an' I knew the man who killed Jim Marshall did."

"All right," sighed Sleepy. "I don't know what you're talkin' about, but you do, so I'm satisfied. Remember them high hills south of Pima City, the ones you said looked like they had been painted agin the sky?"

"Purple ones, Sleepy, like a lot of broken teeth?"

"Yeah, that's the ones. I'm wonderin' what's on the other side."

"I wondered that before we came north."

And they went *poco-poco* down across the broad mesa in the starlight, with only the soft thud of slow traveling hoofs, the jingle of chains, the creak of saddle leather to tell of their passing—heading for the purple hills.

THE END

FINNEGAN

A Story of the Seafarers

By. R. V. GERY

CHALLIS, who is second mate of the tramp ship *Levuka*, and has a bass voice deep as his own experience of the wickednesses of earth and sea, first honored me with his confidence on the run from Singapore to the Moluccas. There had been—for me—a fortunate occasion the night before we sailed, when Challis had looked too long into the painted eyes of one of the harpies that infest a certain street, and I had been able to assist him in the subsequent argument with her half-caste bully. It had cost me some cuticle on my knuckles, a black eye, and a feminine bite in the fleshy part of my leg; but Challis was profoundly grateful.

He came up to me at ten o'clock at night, while the *Levuka* was wallowing her way over a sea like oily quicksilver.

" 'Night," he said gruffly.

The electric under the bridge overhang shone on him as he leaned over the rail at my side, turned his strong face into a mysterious grouping of errant lights and shadows, and made of his hairy torso—he was in singlet and trousers only—a preliminary study for the Farnese Hercules.

"Good night," I said, and offered him my pouch. He filled a venerable black briar, puffed fiercely for a moment or two, and then swung round on me.

"I've not thanked you yet," he said, "for that little business the other night."

I assured him that there was nothing to thank me for.

"Any one would have done as much," I told him.

"Ah, but that ain't so," he said. "That's just where you're wrong. There's plenty of fellers that'd find they'd urgent private affairs with their auntie the other end of town if they saw trouble blowin' up like that. Plenty of fellers. It ain't every one that'd jump into it quick, like you did, mister."

He drew on his pipe once more, in a

manner which I have since come to watch for as prognosticating a story.

"Funny," he said, "that turn-up in Singapore reminded me of a little chap sailed with me one time—years ago, it was, before I'd sat for me ticket and started bein' respectable. Finnegan was his name, and he was a stoker—part of one voyage—on the old *Tontine*. Maybe you'd like the yarn, as showin' just what interferin' in another feller's troubles can lead you into, unless you're careful."

He stared out over the glimmering water, and I was respectfully silent, lest the thread should be broken and the tale die a-borning. Challis resumed in his rolling basso profondissimo, its undertones keyed to the rumble of the *Levuka's* engines, and the velvet shadows at play on the darkling sea:

EYAH—Finnegan! Irish, he was, of course; got into trouble, he told me, with the police somewhere or other over there, on account of makin' too free with an Orangeman's napper, and had to bolt for it. Signed on with us in London River, I rec'lect, and come aboard with a split lip, a couple of teeth missin' and no seat to his pants. A short little black mustached feller with a nutcracker face and a fightin' chin. And a temper like a tomcat with the bellyache. I never saw nothin' like it. No wonder he'd made Ireland a bit 'ot for him.

He wasn't aboard two days, and we was barely clear of the Channel, when he started in with 'is little games; and by the time we'd made the Canal—the *Tontine* was on the China run—he'd been in trouble a dozen times. Always the same business; insubordination, speakin' out of his turn, and usin' his fists—ah, and anything else he could lay hands on—in a way they wasn't meant to be used on shipboard.

He'd fought his way clear through the black gang, and they was afraid of him; he'd had a set-to with one of the greasers—name of Levitt—that was six inches taller and thirty pounds heavier than 'im, and by the time Finnegan had finished dancin' on his face Levitt wasn't human no longer; he'd mauled a couple of the deck hands so as their mothers couldn't have taken any affidavies about 'em; and 'e'd pretty near killed the cook.

A proper hard case, 'e seemed to be, and the master, Matchett, after loggin' him three times, was threatenin' to clap him in irons and discharge him in Aden, which ain't any pleasant place to be discharged in, as you may be aware.

And then one day he come to me, when we was runnin' down the Red Sea.

"Challis," he says, for we was more friendly than others—me bein' bigger than even 'e'd care to handle, "Challis, will ye not help a poor divil that's in trouble?"

"Why," I says to him, "what's the matter, Paddy? Seems to me you're able to help yourself, and better than the next man. Who's been treadin' on your tail now?"

He looks at me mighty pitiful.

"It's the Third," he says. "A damn nasty little spalpeen he is," he says, "and with a puss of consequence on him like a travelin' rat, cock him up! And by the Holy Fly, Challis," he says, "leave him open his gob to me once again, and I'll be handin' him a slap across it that'll be doin' him no manner of good, the dirty tyrant."

"Yes," I says, "and get clink for strikin' an officer. Talk sense, Paddy."

Still and all, I could feel with him about this man Wake, that was third engineer. A nasty little feller 'e was, as Finnegan had said, and fair spoilin' for the beltin' there wasn't any one aboard could give him, barrin' the officers—and they wouldn't be likely to, although they'd no use for him either, as I happened to know. One of these whitey faced squirts he was, that's everlastin' usin' his rank to play the bully, and thinkin' that's discipline. You'll find 'em sometimes, still, even in the merchant service. And he'd make the stokehold his own private partic'lar slice of hell, as you might say.

So there was plenty of us would have

given a month's pay cheerful to see Paddy Finnegan lay into Mister Wake, but it couldn't be, of course. There's a thing called the Merchant Shippin' Act that's got teeth in it put there special for stokers what strike their officers, and old Matchett wasn't the brand of master to have any mercy on them kind of capers. Besides, there wasn't anything Wake himself would have liked better. He was just that sort.

So I smoothed Finnegan down as best I could—it was rather like pattin' a wasp's nest—and told him to go away an' boil 'is ugly Irish potato of a head, and the v'yage proceeded.

We called at Colombo, and Wake went ashore. Just what happened there I never did find out, but 'e was brought off at three in the mornin', lushed to the eyes, and with a knife slash down one cheek. It was the p'lice brought him off, too, and there was a pretty 'ubbub over it, with the Old Man hauled out of 'is bed in pajamas to listen to their opinion of 'is officers. Some of it leaked out—you can't keep a thing like that secret aboard ship—an' there was a woman mixed up in it all right. I wasn't surprised; it's always them are the worst.

But that's all we knew, except that Matchett was in a stinkin' passion and attended to Mister Bloomin' Wake proper. 'E hated womanizin', did Matchett, bein' one of them old fashioned psalm singin' skippers, although a grand seaman.

Anyhow, Wake got 'is tea in a mug and heard a few things for 'is own good, and—bein' Wake—didn't like it. So he starts in to take it out on the stokehold again, just to relieve his silly little feelin's, I suppose. Finnegan copped it worse than any one, and I ain't seen a man suffer like that little Irish feller did. 'Twasn't what Wake said or did—for after all 'e wasn't anything much more than wind and what-you-may-call-it, like the barber's cat—but it was 'avin' to sit down and take it without so much as mutterin', for Wake was sharp on the lookout for an 'int of back talk or dumb insolence. Finnegan was fair bubblin' in a day or so, and every one saw it, even Wake hisself and 'e rode Finnegan worse than ever, naturally.

Finally the chief took things in hand himself, and got the 'abit of droppin' casual-like into the stokehold when Wake was there, no doubt with his eye liftin' for Finnegan and what 'e might do with a fireslice if 'e was tempted too far. Wake noticed it, and laughed in 'is nasty way.

"Suppose I'm scared of a rat like that, sir?" he said. "He wouldn't dare do nothin'. He's only a lousy Irishman, anyway."

Now that was pretty bad, for Finnegan overheard him. They said 'e went blue white like a corpse, and he was a ruddy faced little feller as a rule. He couldn't do nothin', of course—there was Matchett waitin' for 'im with the darbies if 'e did, and a stretch behind the bars, sure pop. He turned away an' went on with his firin', they told me, and for two days on end he never let a word out of him, even to me.

AND THEN it began to get around—you know the way it does on a ship: men talkin' under their breath and whisperin' on watch—that Finnegan was goin' to end it all, soon's he got Wake ashore. Singapore, behind us there, was our next port, and there was a lot of guessin' about what'd happen when we docked. Finnegan, 'e said nothin' at all; just went about with that bottled-up face on 'im, as if he was windin' himself up for somethin' that was goin' to let fly with a run one o' these days. And Wake carried on worse than ever. I suppose it was some one's dooty to have taken the pair of 'em to Matchett and made a fuss about it; but somehow nobody did. They seemed to be shut off from the rest of us, sort of, and we watchin' from the sidelines to see what'd come of it. And there's a lot in that way of lookin' at it, when you come to reckon it out.

At last—night before we made port—I'd had enough of it. I went to Finnegan.

"Look 'ere, me joker," I says. "It ain't

no good beatin' about the bush this way. Wot's all this they're sayin' about you and Wake?"

He looks at me very old fashioned.

"And what's that to you," he says, "and leave Misther Wake and me alone."

"Oh, no, you don't, Paddy," says I, for I was fond of the little chap in a way. "Think I'm goin' to see you hung over a swine like Wake? I ain't that kind, cocky."

He straightens up from his sea chest, where he's fumblin' over his shore going clothes.

"Arrah, to hell with ye, Challis," he says, pleasant enough. "Can ye not keep yerself to yerself? Me intintions towards the gentleman ye allude to are all fair and above board."

"Oh," I says. "They are, are they? Then what's that nasty lookin' thing you have there?"

I'd caught a glimpse of it hidden underneath the clothes in his chest—a big, ugly, old white handled revolver, that looked as if it might have belonged to his grandfather. He covers it up quick, but I saw enough of his face to make me sure enough what it was he was after.

"Come on," I says. "Hand it over. You ain't goin' round with no guns, the way you are just now."

"And who'll stop me?" he asks, very snappish.

"I will," I tells him. "Cough it up, now, ducky!"

At that he calls me by a name I don't let no one use, and comes at me all thumbs and boot toes, for 'e was a dirty fighter, was Paddy Finnegan. He'd landed me a kick in the groin before I could get me hands to him proper.

"You damn Irish ape!" I yells, for he'd hurt me more'n a little. "I'll learn you—"

And I takes him by the scruff and the seat of his pants and hauls him across my knee, him yellin' bloody murder and all manner of lovin' expressions, both in English and Irish, which is a caution for swearin' in. I couldn't help laughin' at him, all the while I was skelpin' him.

"Now," I says, "will you give it up?"

"I'll not," says he, tryin' hard to fix his teeth in me.

"Very well," says I. "Then 'ere's a bit more for you to go on with." And I lays it on him good with the palm of me large flat 'and.

I'd pretty near given him enough, when in walks Mister Wake.

"What's all this?" he asks, officious.

"Nothin' but a bit o' fun, sir," says I, puttin' Paddy down, and speakin' very respectful. I wasn't goin' to be mixed up in any row with the little *barnshoot.*

He sniffs, sarcastic.

"H'm," he says. "If I was you, Challis, I'd let this man alone. He'll do you no good aboard here. Get out o' this, you!" he says to Finnegan. "And don't let me catch you brawlin' again, you low Carth'lic hound!"

Finnegan stands quite still for a moment, looking at him. Then he laughs—kind of a croak, it was—and turns on his heel and goes below. I didn't like that laugh, and it seemed to me that now was the time to put in a warnin' to this Wake, for Paddy'd get him if he could, after that last remark.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," I says to him. "I'd like to say a word."

He whips round on me.

"Well," says he, "what is it? If you're tryin' to shield that Irish scum, save your breath. I'll have him in irons yet—" Which was no way for a ship's officer to talk to a deckhand, and he knew it, for he dried up all of a sudden.

"Sir," I says, "it ain't no concern of mine, of course, but if I was you I'd look out for Finnegan. He ain't safe."

Wake laughs out loud.

"Are you presumin' to advise me, me man?" says he. "When I require such, it's not to you I'll come. Clear up that mess," he says, pointin' to Paddy's ditty box, "and remember what I said about steerin' clear of Finnegan."

At that he parades off with his silly nose in the air; and I takes me nails out of the palms of me hands. I was young in them days, and maybe a bit 'otter about

the temper than what I am now—but Mister Wake was mighty close to gettin' somethin' for himself just then, and not from Paddy Finnegan, neither.

"Oh, all right!" I says to meself. "You've had your warnin', me lad, so don't blame me if anything happens. 'Owever," I says, "next thing is to keep Paddy out of murder." And I puts the pistol in me pocket, packs up the ditty box, and goes out.

NEXT evenin' we docks as per schedule. Fires is banked and the engineroom staff comes off duty. There's a lot of cargo to be shifted, so there wasn't any shore for us deckhands; but I see Wake, got up like a perishin' peacock, go minanderin' down the gangway (Yes, I says, I know what's your lay, me gay Lothario!) and in a while Finnegan comes up to me, with black murder in his eye.

"Where's me pistol?" he says. "Give it up, ye dirty scut!"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," I says. "But if it's another beltin' you're after, just wait until I come off this job, Paddy, and I'll oblige you."

Well, that was all the conversation that took place, owin' to the first mate's havin' notions about chewin' the fat while on duty; and Finnegan goes off with a flea in 'is ear, mutterin' to himself. I see him go down the gangplank a while later, and wondered just what his little game might be.

About midnight, sure enough, here comes Wake back—nicely enameled, as you might say, but nothin' offensive about him. He's got a grin on his face, though, that means he's clicked somewhere or other, or I'm much mistook—flushed some of his game, if you like. He goes below to bed, and in a minute or so Finnegan slips up the plank and goes down too.

I went after him. He was cold sober—not a drop in him—and there was a kind of an 'appy look about him, like little Johnny that's been in the jam.

"Well," says I. "Have a nice walk, ducky?"

"Ye're a damn Saxon traitor," he says, "an' I want no more to do with ye. But," he says with a twinkle, "if ye hear anny news about Misther Wake shortly, don't be after sayin' I didn't give ye the office."

"Ho!" says I. "And what might you mean by that?"

"Ah, just nothin' at all," he says, grinnin' like ninety. "Will ye give me me pistol?"

"No," I says, "I won't. And that's flat."

He shrugs his shoulders.

"Very well," says he. "That'll be all for now." And with that he curls up and goes to sleep, peaceful as you please.

Well, that happened twice runnin'. Each time Mister Wake would get 'imself up all mucked out like a Piccadilly fancy man, in his white uniform an' pipeclayed shoes, and go off like he was walkin' on eggshells; returnin' about midnight, just lightly done, and with that self-conscious smirk on his little face. And each time Finnegan gives him a couple of minutes law, and follows—and 'e comes back too, happy an' glorious like the ambitious marine. An' there's the entire ship's company of the *Levuka* shoutin' the odds on the business, which ain't anything more nor less than when and how Paddy Finnegan's goin' to commit murder on certificated Third Engineer Thomas Walter Wake.

Men are odd coves, when you come to look at it square, ain't they?

The third evenin', Finnegan comes to me again. "Give me what's me own, ye low English divil," he says, "or be the powers, I'll skin ye alive!"

"Skin away," says I. "When you think of beginnin' just let me know, and I'll smack your situpon again a bit."

"Ah, for the love of the saints—" he begins, fleechin' and beggin'.

"See here," I says. "I've told you once I'm not goin' to see you hung if I can help it, partic'lar over that swine there, and I'll not give you that murderin' engine of

yours. You cool off, cocky, or you and me'll part brass rags."

He turned black as a thunderstorm.

"Well," he says, bitter and between his teeth, "you watch yourself, Misther Challis, that's all—for when I've settled with him, I'll settle with you too."

"That's all right," says I. "But has it occurred to you that it's just possible there's two c'n play at that kind of game?"

"Well, I'm warnin' you," says he. "I have that man tracked down—and to-night," he says, "is the night, and by the piper that played before Moses, he's a dead man this minute. And after that, Challis," he says, twistin' up his face, "look you out for yourself!"

"And thank you for them kind words," says I, "me little penn'orth of pop. I'll watch out. And now run away and play, for you ain't no ways ornamental," I says, "and your face gives me the colic."

He goes off blacker than ever, and I lights a pipe and begins to think things out careful. I wasn't frightened of what he might do to me, you'll understand, but it was Wake I was thinkin' of; for if ever I see a killin' plain, this was the time.

ROUND about seven or so, here comes Wake as usual up from his cabin, and off ashore with 'im. There must have been half the ship's company watchin' him as he went over the side, and some of the remarks that was passed, confidential, wasn't in any ways kind. Generally, when an officer goes ashore and the ship knows what 'e's goin' for—and the ship does, nine times in ten; you'd be surprised—there's a kind of a "Good luck to you, boy!" feelin'; that's to say, if he's as well liked as he ought to be; and a quiet grin, maybe, behind the hand. But not with Wake. Oh, no! There was the stokehold in force leanin' on the rail watchin' him go down the plank, and Mucky Evans, that never did care a damn what 'e said anyway, sings out—

"Ow, kiss me, darlin'—me 'usband's not 'ome!"

Matchett, who was on the bridge, heard it—must have; but there wasn't anything 'e could do, for Mucky dived below as soon's he'd said it. And Wake heard it too, for I see him half turn.

In a couple of minutes Finnegan followed him. He never said a word to nobody—except that he scowled very dirty at me as he passed—and, curious thing, nobody said a word to him. As I was sayin', it was just as if the business was between Wake and him, and they was to be left alone to work it out between them. Anyhow, he went down the plank in a dead silence, and followed Wake, maybe a hundred yards behind him.

And then it come over me, sudden, that this had to be put a stop to, and that it was me that was to put a stop to it. 'Twasn't Wake I was thinkin' of now—'e'd get his own all right, sooner or later; bound to—but it was this rampin' little pepperpot of an Irishman. I liked Finnegan, and I wasn't the only one, neither. Even the chaps 'e'd leathered—Levitt with his face all trod out of shape, and the cook—had a sort of soft spot for the little man. And I began to think of him jigglin' in the bight of a rope, and all over Wake that wasn't worth hangin' a dog for. And next thing I knew I'd slipped below, got me cap—and Paddy's old white handled cannon as well—and off on to the quay after 'em.

You know Singapore. There's plenty of places hotter—Saigon, for instance—but still, if it's action you're wantin', and know the ropes, there isn't much you can't find there. I was a kid in them days, and 'adn't much more than served me apprenticeship in that sort of thing, and Finnegan—it was his first turn in the East. I dunno what he thought about it—never had time to find out—but it must have been pretty different to Belfast or Cork, or even the Mersey, which was about all he'd seen before. How 'e'd kept track of Wake the two previous nights was beyond me, too; but kept track of him he had, and there 'e was in front of me, paddin' along like a beagle, with his cap pulled down over his face, and keepin' in the shadow, maybe fifty yards behind

Wake that was walkin' along so's you could almost see him lickin' his chops.

I stuck to the two of them, another fifty yards in rear.

After a while Wake turns off the lighted street, and goes up a side road, where there's a lot of houses standin' in trees a bit back from the sidewalks, and gardens, and big clumps of bushes. Kind of mysterious it was, for the night was drawin' down on us now, and there wasn't any illumination except now and then from the open door of one or other of the houses. 'Twasn't anything of a pretty neighborhood neither, as even I could see, with its dark holes and corners, and frowsy lookin' buildings, and every now an' then a Chinaman—place seemed to be full of 'em—runnin' across the road like a rat in a hurry. Matter of fact, since then I've discovered it's a districk even the police ain't very fussy about goin' into at night, except in twos and threes.

However, I don't believe there was any of us knew that just then—I'm sure of Finnegan and myself, and pretty sure of Wake too. He was just the kind of ass that'll run his silly 'ead in anywhere after a girl; there are plenty of them idjits about, as you're aware. So we went on, one, two an' three of us, each one on the other's trail and Wake in front full cry after what 'e'd come for. Pretty crowd o' fools, eh?

By and by, Wake stops, under the hedge—it was some thick stuff or other—that ran in front of a house set back a few yards under trees. The place was dark, and all the light there was came from the last of the sunset, a kind of pale reflection more than a light. Finnegan in front of me stops too, and slides into the shadow; and I found a tree handy and dodged be'ind it. I suppose the three of us was all inside thirty yards.

I didn't see her comin'—but first thing I knew here's Wake talkin' to a woman under the hedge. His white clothes glimmered across the road, and I could just see her, in some sort of a red colored dress —*sarong*—standin' close up to him and talkin' in whispers. Course, it was too far to hear what they was sayin'. I saw Paddy Finnegan move and wondered what 'e was thinkin' about and whether 'e'd make his stroke now or not. I got ready to take a hand if he did.

And then they was gone, the two of them. Slipped in through the hedge, and up to the house, like a couple of shadows. In a minute there's a light in the lower room, shinin' out through the branches an' shrubs.

"Ho," says I to meself. "So that's it, is it? Now what are you goin' to do, Paddy?"

He'd run out fair into the middle of the road and I could hear him cursin' fit to split. Seemed to me that now was the time to give him a little surprise. I walked up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"'Ullo, cocky!" I says. "Wodjer doin' here? Thinkin' of joinin' the party over yonder?"

He jumps round on me with a snarl.

"Challis!" he says. "Ye big interferin' bosthoon, get to hell out o' this!"

"Oh, no, ducky," says I. "Things ain't that way—not at all they ain't. I thought I told you I wasn't goin' to 'ave you murderin' people, promiscuous. Want another slappin' on your little backside?"

I was tryin' to laugh it off, but Finnegan, he wasn't doin' any laughin' just then.

"Listen to me here," he says, "if ye're so much of a busybody ye can't keep the damn snout of ye out of other people's doin's. There's a man in there, and it's dead he'll be inside ten minutes, for I'll walk in and kill him with me bare hands, if it must be that way. And if ye are wishful to go the same way as him—for I'll get ye, Challis, some road or other, if I set me mind to it—ye've only to say the word. Stand back, now," he says mighty vicious, "and let me do the work I have to do—you that's sendin' me to it without a weapon to me fist!"

Well, up till then I'd been jokin' at him, as you might say, and treatin' him as a kid that only needed a spankin' to cure him of his nonsense. Me bein' conceited of the size of me, I suppose it was,

and young and a fool that couldn't see when a man was set firm on his will. But this last blow-up of Finnegan's brought me up all standin'. 'E meant every word of it. And while I stood in the road with him there, wonderin' what was comin' next, somehow or other it struck me all of a sudden that there was a lot in what Paddy said. That this tick Wake deserved what was comin' to him, I mean, and that it wasn't, after all, any affair of mine to interfere.

And Finnegan saw it. He comes up close to me and puts an arm through mine.

"For the love of the saints," he says, hoarse and quickly, "give it me, Challis, for I know you've it on you."

I hesitated and 'ung back, for this was more'n I'd reckoned with. Bein' mixed up active in a murder wasn't anything to feel 'appy about. Then Finnegan played his last card.

"Would ye have me go to him, and me with me bare hand?" he said. "For it's unarmed I am this minute, Challis—and Wake, he's a pistol on him since you warned him."

Eh, I was young—I was young. I stuck me hand in me pocket and pulled out what was there. Finnegan grabbed it, and I heard him catch his breath and saw his eyes glitter in the last of the light. He made off for the house, and I after him—partner in what would swing the two of us higher than Haman if it was ever to come out. Eyah—Paddy Finnegan . . .

THE LIGHT was still in the window, and we crept up cautious through the trees and looked in.

There was me fine feller, disposed as comfortable as you please on a kind of a couch, with his arm round the girl. The room was well furnished, with Western stuff—none o' these Oriental hangin's nor mats nor carpets, I mean; just plain chairs and the couch and a table with a brass oil lamp lit on it, and a picture of the Prince of Wales—as was then—on the wall, I remember. Very much the sort of room you might see in Limehouse or Bermondsey at home. There was a bottle and a glass on the table, too, and Wake was referrin' to it pretty frequent in the intervals of 'uggin' the woman.

Her? Well, I will say this for Mister Wake—I liked his taste. She was a chink, pure bred by the look of her, with the tiny hands and feet and the neck like a lily stalk you can see sometimes, if you're very lucky and know how, up in Canton. She'd a scarlet robe on 'er—'twasn't the ordinary *sarong*, neither—and a couple of flowers stuck in 'er hair; waxy lookin' blossoms that matched 'er waxy skin. Oh, she was a little bit of all right, and where Wake 'ad got hold of her was more'n I could make out. And she was actin' up to him very lovin', too. Mister Wake was in clover.

So there they was in plain sight, not five yards from us through the window, which was one of them French ones that opens up the middle. I heard Finnegan grindin' his teeth beside me, and he lifts the old white handled *bundook*. I grabs him by the wrist.

"No!" I whispers—it was all a damn funny business, for by this time it seemed to me as if I was as much concerned in this thing as Paddy was himself. "No! Wait—wait till he comes out. You'll get him better that way. And there's the woman. Want to hit her?"

He's just goin' to say somethin' unpleasant, I've no manner of doubt, when the room door opens and in walks a Chinaman. Finnegan lowers the gun and watches, open mouthed.

He was a dignified lookin' old codger in a long black gown with gold figures on it, and a pigtail. You don't see that sort now; they most of 'em wear Homburg hats and light suits in these times. But this was one of the old kind, and I saw now where the girl had come from.

He bows to Wake mighty polite, and our little gentleman gets up. We couldn't hear what they said, for the window was shut, but Wake was smilin' his sickly grin, and the old feller had taken his

hands out of his long sleeves and was wavin' them to and fro, courteous and hospitable by the look of it. The girl sat on the couch watchin' the pair of 'em out of the corners of her slantin' black eyes, and I began to wonder what was the meanin' of it all, for she wasn't one of the ordinary sort, not by no means. It looked to me a lot as if Mister Wake 'ad clicked with a good class chink fambly that was European enough to give their women a certain amount of rope. You found 'em, even in them days, in big cities like Singapore.

At any rate it was clear enough that the old man took no manner of objection to her sittin' there on the couch with a white officer; and while we watches, the door opens again and a servant brings in a lot of things to eat, ceremonious, kind of, and respectful. The girl jumps up and serves Wake, as pretty and attentive as you please; and then she serves the old man, that's smilin' away to himself contented-like.

Well, the two of us stayed there watchin' them for I daresay pretty nigh half an hour, and I heard Finnegan mutterin' under 'is breath—prayers or curses, I dunno which—as 'e sees that poisonous pup asettin' there so comfortable. But 'e didn't offer to do nothin' with his gun, and I believe 'e'd made up his mind after all to wait until he could catch this Wake in the open. As for me, the whole jimbang 'ad got me flummoxed, I don't mind ownin'—for 'ere was I, a decent deckhand with ideas about sittin' for me ticket some day, let in for a murder. And rather likin' the idea, mark you! And then I'd think of me and Paddy Finnegan in the dock together, and make up me mind to take 'im by the collar and haul him out o' this—and then I'd look in that window and see that damn little jumped-up skipper's delight in there, and not be so sure. 'Twasn't a pleasant 'alf hour for me, I'm tellin' you.

And then Mister Wake gets up and beckons the old man to the other side of the room, very confidential. We could see both their faces as clear as I can see yours and clearer. Wake he puts his hand in his pocket and pulls out a roll of notes. 'E says somethin' to the old man, with his face screwed into a slimy kind of a grimace, and winks at 'im, and holds out the money. 'Twasn't very hard to see what 'e was drivin' at, and it fair took the wind out of my sails. The dirty little swab! Finnegan stopped his mutterin' as well, and come out with a round curse that'd have blistered the paint off a door.

Well, the old man stares at Wake for a moment like he don't exactly understand. Then he blinks his eyes once or twice very fast and—ever see a chink shut his face down? Just as if it was made of clay and some one took a trowel and wiped all the expression off of it. When this happens, in case you ain't aware, it's time to sling your hook, and cut that chink off your visitin' list, for he's as liable to do one thing as another, and you'll never know when it's comin'. That's what the old man did—shut 'is face down—and then he shakes his head, quite courteous but without any more life than in a stone idol, and then 'e says somethin' to the girl (she's lookin' at Wake very queer) and she nods, and then the old feller goes out. As he passes the doorway Finnegan and I catches a glimpse of what he looks like, now Wake can't see him, and if ever I see the devil standin' out of a man's face it was then.

You don't offer an 'igh class chink a bunch of dollars for the pleasure of his daughter's comp'ny, let me tell you—leastways if you do, you'd better invest another bunch in a coffin, and that won't be much use to you, neither.

But Wake, he don't know anything about this, and 'e thinks it's as easy to buy what 'e wants from this fambly as from any of the others he's in the 'abit of dealin' with at various ports of call. He stands lookin' after the old man a minute, and then grins an' shrugs 'is shoulders, as if 'e was sayin', "Why, you silly old coot, you don't know what's good for you!" And then 'e turns to the girl, who's still lookin' at him very odd, and then 'e turns off the light, and we heard the girl scream.

WELL, as you might say, that tore it. Finnegan beside me says somethin' red hot under 'is breath, and jumps up to make a run at the window; but I pulls him down.

"Ah, to hell!" he snorts, breathin' heavy through the nose. "Is there not enough reason for ye to let me kill him now?"

Indeed, it seemed to me that there was. If I'd had any softness before about allowin' the wild little Irishman to do what 'e wanted to Mister Wake, it was gone now. Still, I didn't exactly like the idea of burstin' into a chink's house to kill a feller, even if it was a worm like this Wake; and I says so.

"No," I says. "Not yet. Wait till 'e comes out, Paddy, and then get 'im. You'll have the whole crowd down on us if you try any tricks here."

"Will ye let me go, ye damned English busybody!" says Finnegan, strugglin' and fightin' to get free. "He's my meat, and here goes for him!"

I don't properly know how it'd have ended between us, for he was as slippery as an eel, and fair wild to get at Wake; he'd have put a bullet into me, likely enough—he was far enough gone for it; but all on a sudden there's the devil's own hullabaloo inside the house, tramplin' of feet, and a jabber of Chinese, and then—there wasn't any mistakin' it—a squeal from Wake like a pig feelin' the knife at his throat. Finnegan and I drops one another and turns round to the window.

It's lighted now again, with a flarin' flickerin' torch instead of the lamp. There's half a dozen Chinese beauties in the room—big, hard, yellow men that look like business—and they've got Wake, strappin' him down to the couch; he's howlin' and bellerin' fit to split, but some one shoves a greasy rag down 'is throat and stops that. The girl's gone, but in a minute here comes the old man, and I'm tellin' you he was bad to look at. Wake rolls his eyes at 'im once and stops 'is tryin' to squeal right away.

'E stands over Wake, does the old boy, and says somethin' we didn't catch. Whatever it was, it turned Mister Wake a lovely shade o' pea-green, and we could see 'im begin to cry—cry, mark you. The old chink looks down at him, very contemptuous; and then 'e flicks a finger at one of the big chaps, and 'e comes forward with a knife; a nasty crooked business with a slicin' edge to it. D'jever hear of the Ten Thousand Cuts, eh? Well, that's what that was for. And that's what comes of tryin' any Port Said tricks on a Chinese gentleman's fambly, too.

'Owever, it wasn't any time to be thinkin' about such things—leastways as far as I was concerned. I'd me hands full from then on with Paddy Finnegan.

Just as soon's 'e sees the chinks goin' to do a bit of artistic carvin', like, on Mister Wake, 'e goes proper off his head.

"Leave him be, ye yellow scum!" he yells, and swelp me if 'e doesn't make a dive 'ead first through the window. "He's mine—leave him be, will ye?"

There's a howl from the chinks you could hear from hell to breakfast, and the feller that's holdin' the torch drops it somehow or other, just as I'm followin' Paddy through the broken window glass. And for the next two minutes or so me time's taken up with lettin' drive with me fists promiscuous-like into the dark, to keep the yellow devils and their knives at arms' length. I got a stab in the forearm as it was—nothin' much, but that wasn't the chink's fault—before I could lay hold of a couple of the slippery customers an' knock their heads together.

So I didn't hear anything of Finnegan, as you might say, until—*bang!* goes his old pistol right under me nose.

And then there's a thump and a grunt I've heard once or twice since, although mebbe you haven't. It's what 'appens when a knife goes home, good and permanent, and once you've heard it you can't mistake it again. Mind you, all this time it was as black as pitch, and the room was full of knives and the smoke of Paddy's gun. And then there's another lot of jabberin' in Chinese, excited; and

then there's a groan I didn't like a bit. I took and clouted my two chinks' heads together and dropped 'em on the floor to come to, and then there's the old man's voice, callin' for a lamp.

It come, and what it showed wasn't pretty. Wake's still on the couch, and he's dead. There was a bullet hole in his chest. And on the floor, with a knife stickin' out from between 'is shoulders, is Finnegan. Standin' over him, stupid, and as if 'e's not quite sure of what 'e's done, is one of the chinks.

Finnegan opens his eyes, and I drops to his side.

"I got him, Challis," 'e says. "I got him at the latter end. 'Tis mine he was this long time, and not any yellow Chinaman's. The saints—"

And he rolled his eyes and was gone.

I laid him down and the old man stepped out.

"Ah," says he in good enough English. "This is a pity."

"Yus," I says, pretty bitter. "It is. Why can't your murderin' swine be more careful 'oo they're stickin'?"

He shrugs.

"A pity," he says again. "Your friend was in too much of a hurry. A word to me, and this would not have happened—and he might have assisted at an end that would have been interesting. We Chinese—" and he smiled so that cold water run down me back—"pride ourselves on being artists in that line."

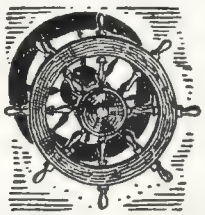
Well, there wasn't anything more to be done about it. The old chink—seems 'e 'ad quite a pull with the authorities—'elped me in seein' Paddy buried; and then I went back to the *Tontine*, and a fine stew they was all in for a couple o' days about Mister Wake. Matchett even asked me if I knew anythink about 'im, which shows 'e 'ad 'is suspicions. But no one ever 'eard any more of 'im, nor of Paddy either. "Missin'" was all the tombstone either of 'em got, and maybe it's just as well. They'd canceled one another out, as you might say, and it was better that they'd leave a clean sheet.

* * *

Challis knocked out his final pipe on the rail. It was close on midnight, and the boom of his voice coupled with the wash of the waves under the *Levuka's* counter had made me sleepy.

"So that's that," he rumbled. "I was young then—eyah, how young!—but it's stuck with me; the no-sense of gettin' yourself mixed up with other blokes' affairs. And I've been wonderin' ever since just how the law'd look on my own share of the performance. Might 'ave swung for it, I suppose—daresay I ought to have, bein' a silly young fool . . . Well, good night."

He rolled off abruptly forward, leaving me to my thoughts.



HOME IS THE BOOMER

By E. S. DELLINGER

A Story of Mountain Railroading

IT WAS Christmas Eve. A biting east wind pushed billows of thin mist before it across the Bloomfield freight yards, leaving a film of ice on running board and grab iron. Into this wind and mist Speck Mason swung down from the rear platform of the 708 caboose, glanced back at the green disk of the marker which he had lighted and set in its socket, and strode forward to inspect the mile of empty freight cars he had been called to help Old Hank Parsons herd eastward across the Ozark Hills.

Speck did not love the old conductor. Nobody did for that matter. The old man had a tongue as sharp as acid, and he did not spare his brakemen. That in itself was sufficient reason to make any boomer go into battle. But between Speck Mason and Old Hank Parsons was even a deeper cause for animosity than either tongue or temper.

Ten years ago, Speck, a student bucking the extra board out of Bloomfield, had been forced to work with Old Hank and his one crony—old John Adams. One

night Speck and John had set out six cars in a blind siding. John had instructed Speck to handle the engine and leave the job of braking and blocking the cars to him. For some reason, the old man had failed to do his duty, and during the night the cars had rolled out on the main line.

In the investigation Old Hank, either because he despised Speck on general principles, or because he wanted to protect the older man because he knew John was too old to get a job elsewhere, or because he really held Speck responsible, had blamed him with the accident; and Trainmaster Warren, acting on the information, had fired him for it.

At the close of the investigation, Speck, justly enraged by the injustice done him, had tried to whip both crew and office force single handed. Failing, he had threatened, boy-like, that he would even the score with Old Hank Parsons if it took him the rest of his life.

Thus set adrift at nineteen, he had become a boomer. Since then, itching heels, Irish temper, battling fists had kept him on the move. Two weeks ago, his mother having been stricken with paralysis, he had come home whence his reputation had preceded him, and had asked Warren to take him back on the job. The trainmaster had flatly refused.

"I know you of old, Mason," Warren had told him. "You hair's as red as it always was. Your fists are still sore from caving in the face of the last conductor you beat hell out of. You've got the itch in both heels. You'd be in trouble before the ink got dry on your application. Give you a job? Not me!"

Speck, momentarily forgetting why he had returned to Bloomfield, had left the office happy. He would rather be a boomer than settle down and grow whiskers on a home guard job. But when he had gone home to his mother, he had changed his mind; had returned to the trainmaster's office determined to get a job; and had finally been accepted under the express condition that he would take a temporary vacancy with Old Hank Parsons and hold it thirty days without getting into trouble.

That had been a real assignment, bigger even than he had anticipated. For Old Hank Parsons still seemed to remember vividly every boyish threat he had made that day in the office, ten years before, when he had been discharged . . .

Car after car he passed, pausing beside each door to see that it was fastened, and stopping for a split second at each coupling to thrust his lantern in so that by its faint glow he could make sure hand brakes were released and air hose coupled.

The night was dark. Behind him nineteen green and yellow switch lights sank one by one into the mist; the gleam of his marker changed to a green blur and disappeared; and the red tail lights of the Lead Hill Local, pulling in two tracks over, were swallowed up. Away to the east, where switchmen shunted wheat and meat and merchandise over the hump, where firemen sweated and where engines panted, whistles screamed and bells clanged, the lights of yard office and round house beat back the darkness. But down in the depths of the eastbound yard, Speck Mason, with his brakeman's lantern making only darkness visible, was alone in the acres of mist curtained cars.

An unseen step crunched on the cinders in the darkness beyond his train. He hesitated, glanced over his shoulder and strode on. Thirty-five cars from the caboose he came upon an Erie automobile car with its side door a third open.

"Damn lazy car toads," he grumbled.

He thrust his lantern inside the car and peered about. The floor was covered to a depth of from six inches to two feet with straw. The brakeman called a warning to any hobo who might have concealed himself in the straw. No one answered. He closed the door, fastened it and, with another quick look about, hurried forward.

Up at the yard office, as he had come to work, everybody from the call boy to the night yardmaster had been keyed to fever pitch. There had been murder and

robbery that day. Three men, assumed to be Jake the Killer, Chicago Lou and Shorty Ferona, members of the old Green River Gang, had held up the Kansas City Express at Lead Hill, thirty miles to the northeast of Bloomfield and, failing to secure the rich haul expected, had shot down in cold blood four members of the train and engine crews.

The whole terminal was agog with the story. Everybody was talking about it. The murdered men were all well known in Bloomfield. It was enough to make a man's hair stand on end to walk along, one alley away from the freight which had come in ten minutes ago from the very scene of the robbery. Still, Speck Mason did not give it much thought. His mind was too busy with his inward raging, because Warren was making him brake behind for Old Hank Parsons thirty days.

After awhile he reached the head end where the engineer and the brakeman stood on the ground, half concealed in the mist and steam from the leaking decapod.

"You goin' out with Old Hank ag'in?" queried the Big Swede, flashing a torch in his face as he approached.

"Yep. I'm goin' to keep on goin' out with him," growled Speck.

"Yeah—I'll bet you do. I've been bettin' my fireman two-bits every trip you make that you'll give the old devil a lickin' before you git back in."

The Swede laughed. Speck lighted a cigaret and, while the tip glowed brightly, replied:

"You better save your money, Swede. Hank an' me's brothers of the rail now. I wouldn't touch a hair of his bald head for a million dollars."

The engineer changed the subject. He and the brakeman talked of the robbery and murder.

Presently Old Hank, his hand full of flimsies, stood silhouetted for a moment in the door of the yard office, then came limping across the tracks. Speck was wondering what his mood would be. He was not left long in doubt. Five tracks away, the old man's voice was audible.

"Damn a job of railroadin'," was his greeting to his crew. "An' damn a sheep headed outfit that'll give a man two student brakemen, an' a student fireman, an' a student engineer an' start him out at midnight with a mile of cars an' a snow storm comin' on. Wish't I'd 'a' had sense enough to stay on the B. & S. outa Birmingham."

With a shrug the head brakeman climbed back into the cab. The Big Swede grinned across at Speck, took his orders and unfolded them. Old Hank raved on.

"That was a job of railroadin'—that B. & S. outa Birmingham. They had brakemen on that pike, even if they was black—two of 'em on every train. They didn't have no such a bunch of deadheads as this cockeyed S. & S. has got here outa Bloomfield. There ain't no excuse of a brakeman on this job could 'a' made two trips on that B. & S. outa Birmingham . . ."

The old man continued his raving, comparing Speck Mason with the colored shacks out of Birmingham. Speck's face became the color of raw beef. The Big Swede looked at him through dim light and laughed. Speck clenched his fists, blew through his nose, and strode angrily away toward the caboose.

BEFORE he had gone five car lengths, the headlight of another engine, dragging four thousand tons of export wheat into the clear alley between his string of empties and the Lead Hill local, came glimmering through the mist. The bark of its exhaust shook the earth as it dragged by him. The loaded cars creaked past. Soon the lights of the yard office and the two engines sank into the sea of mist, leaving him alone in the depths of the yard.

The marker on the caboose of the wheat drag, a green blob in the infinity of gray, loomed dead ahead. It grew brighter as he approached it. He stared into its dull glow, wondered if the brakeman had gone home and left it burning.

When he was fifteen cars away from it, the marker moved, dropped to the level of the eye, wobbled crazily for a moment and disappeared, leaving the aisle between the cars as black as a cavern. From the time the brakeman had taken it from its socket until he had jerked it out of sight behind the end wall of the caboose had been but a fraction of a second; yet, in that brief instant, Speck's eye, a focused camera, had caught in silhouette against its green glow, three shadows.

They were moving shadows. Two of them were upright, either carrying or supporting between them the third. Speck stopped, recalled the robbery at Lead Hill, wondered for a moment, then dismissed the connection from his mind. The robbers, so rumor said, had escaped from Lead Hill in a fast automobile, heading for the hills and caverns of the Green River country. Speck laughed.

"Probably a couple of the boys takin' home a buddy that's been kicked by white mule," he muttered. Then he went on about his business.

The Big Swede whistled off. The empty freight cars rattled and bounced and groaned as the slack went out of their couplings and they started moving. By the time twenty had passed, they were clacking along at ten miles an hour.

As the Erie automobile car, the car whose door Speck had closed twenty minutes ago, came rattling by, he forgot Old Hank. The door of that car was a third open.

"Now who the hell—?" he growled.

He broke off abruptly and struck out after the car. It was going too fast to overtake. He dropped back and, catching the forward ladder of the next car, scrambled to the top of the train, scurried ahead to the center of the Erie, and dropped down upon the roof.

Thrusting his lantern inside the open door, he peered about. There was no one in sight. If the car door had been opened by hoboes, they were buried beneath the piles of straw.

He next tried to close the door. It was stuck. He could not move it. He squatted there on his haunches for a moment, and again the recollection of the Lead Hill robbery flashed through his mind, followed by the image of three shadows in silhouette against the marker of the Lead Hill local. Again he dismissed the thought from his mind, because it had been reported that the robbers had headed toward the Green River country in an automobile.

He dropped back to the ground and, catching the rear platform of the caboose as it came by, stood waiting until Hank had swung up beside him. The conductor did not speak. Speck went inside to the fire. The old man stamped in behind him, set his lantern on the table, tossed his train book beside it and handed Speck the orders.

While Speck was reading them the old man pulled off his coat and backed up to the red hot stove. His grizzled face was seamed and weatherbeaten. His huge shoulders were stooped. With a three fingered hand he tamped black tobacco into the bowl of his cob pipe and lighted it. As he puffed angrily he watched Speck's face and, the moment the brakeman had finished reading the orders, began in a scathing tone—

"You're some brakeman, you are!"

"Yeah?" Speck stuffed the orders into an overall pocket.

"Yeah—some shack. Why didn't you shut the doors on this train before we left the yard? Ain't you read the bulletin book since you been here?"

Speck could have explained. He didn't. He smothered a smile and said—

"Thought I'd leave 'em open so's the poor willies could have a place to ride."

"What!"

The old man fairly screamed. His heavy face became purple. He knocked the tobacco from his pipe and stuffed it into the pocket of his open vest.

"I said I left 'em open so's a brainless old fool would have somethin' to raise hell about."

He turned his back upon the old man and strode toward the cupola. Old Hank started after him, popping his fists.

"I'm goin' to turn you in when I git back to Bloomfield," he stormed. "I'm goin' to turn you in an' git me a brakeman. There ain't no damn boomer goin' to hand me his lip an' git by with it. When I was runnin' a train outa Birmingham—"

What happened in Birmingham, Speck was not to be told tonight. A mile of empties had plenty of slack. The Swede knew how to use it. Just as Old Hank said "Birmingham," the slack went out of that train and Hank, seasoned railroader though he was, brought up with a slam against the rear end of the caboose and turned his bellowing voice against the "ignorant, illiterate, untutored lunkhead that thought he was an engineer," thereby giving Speck a few minutes rest.

Old Hank, still cursing the Big Swede for the crime of rough handling, dropped down to the desk to work on his wheel reports. Speck, with a suppressed chuckle, climbed to the cupola and, holding the lantern between his knees, carefully reread the orders. There was nothing out of the ordinary. They had orders to run as Extra 1598 Bloomfield to Stanton; had time on No. 2, which would follow them; and had right over first No. 35 to Logan. Aside from these two trains, there was nothing else on the road. All they had to do was to hold the main line and keep going as fast as the decapod could drag the mile of empties.

THE NIGHT wore on. The wind grew colder. The mist changed to snow. The jerking of the caboose continued, until finally the conductor, leaving his reports unfinished, came to sit across the cupola. For ten miles he puffed at his old cob pipe in utter silence. The air became thick. Speck, wondering if the old man would make good the threat to turn him in on their return to Bloomfield, was astonished when Old Hank, refilling his pipe, faced him across the cupola and spoke in a half civil tone.

"I'd like to git my hands on the dirty devils that bumped off Cap Rawlins," he said, referring to the death of the Lead Hill conductor.

"Yeah?"

Speck was non-committal. The old man fished a match out of a vest pocket, lighted it, and when the tobacco in the bowl glowed, he continued:

"Yessir, I'd love to hold the rope that hangs them cusses to a blackjack limb. Old Cap Rawlins never harmed a soul in his whole life. I broke behind with him fer three years when I first come up from Birmingham. One of the best men this S. & S. ever had."

"It's sure too bad," ventured Speck.

Old Hank heaved a sigh—a human sigh—and, leaning back against the cushions, spent the next fifteen miles eulogizing Cap Rawlins and yarning about the good times they had had together on the old 097 caboose. This episode was a revelation to Speck Mason. He was tempted toward a feeling of sympathy instead of the bitter animosity which Old Hank had always aroused. He even began trying to justify Old Hank for causing his discharge from the service ten years ago. Perhaps, he thought, the old man had been sacrificing him to save his old friend and buddy, too old to get a job elsewhere.

About midnight they pulled into Warwick where they stopped to take coal and water. Old Hank returned to work on the reports while the caboose was still. Speck donned his sheepskin coat and went out once more to look over his train.

The night was thick with falling snow. At a distance of ten car lengths, the green marker was invisible. But that did not deter Speck Mason. The night is never too dark or the wind too cold for a brakeman to walk his train on the tour of inspection at every water tank. He moved once more alongside the cars, keeping careful watch for hot boxes, for sticking brakes, for broken rigging.

Walking rapidly, he soon reached the Erie car, thirty-fifth from the caboose. At the door he stopped, whistling softly. This door, which he knew positively had been open as the train had pulled by him

in Bloomfield, was now closed and the bolt fastened. Ordinarily he would not have given it a second thought. Tonight he wondered how that door could have been fastened while the train was in motion.

Boldly he walked up to it, jerked the bolt from its socket and tried to open the door. It was stuck. Try as he would he could not budge it. Slipping the fastener back into place, he stood for a moment, listening. There was no sound save the crackle of cooling wheels. He strode forward at last to finish looking the train over.

Three car lengths from the Erie, he turned for another glance over his shoulder. But it was not until his lantern had disappeared in the falling snow that a stifled groan came from the interior of the car. A moment later a stooped figure stole up from behind the dump, sneaked back toward the caboose, fumbled for a moment with a journal box and returned to the Erie.

"That you, Jake?" whispered a hoarse voice inside the car.

"Yeah—" gruffly.

Jake shoved the door lightly. It yielded readily, rolled back along its track. He climbed inside the car and closed the door. Then as he stamped snow from his heavy feet, he continued in his hard, gruff voice:

"Leave it to *me*, Cap. I know how to stop these damned rattlers; an' this 'un's sure'n hell goin' to stop abrupt."

In the Erie was black silence except for an occasional stifled moan from the forward end. Twenty car lengths ahead Speck Mason met Whitey Rohr.

"How're they runnin', Whitey?" he asked.

"Fine as horsefeathers," replied his partner.

The two men crossed the coupling, lighted cigarets and faced each other for a moment through the falling snow.

"Don't forget we're headin' in at Logan for 35," reminded Speck.

"We ain't now," demurred Whitey. "The delayer's got a coupla 19's out here for us. Helpin' us over to Garden Grove."

"Yeah?"

Speck shivered. Whitey stamped his feet and slapped his hands together.

"I reckon I'd better beat it back to that head end," he said. "I sure don't want to git caught out here an' have to walk no tops in this snow storm."

He struck out toward the engine at a lively trot. Speck walked toward the caboose, but before he reached it, the Big Swede had the train under way, thudding through the deepening snow. As the caboose passed Speck caught it, and remained standing on the bottom step until he had picked up the two orders at the station.

Taking them inside, he handed them to Old Hank. The conductor unfolded the green tissue sheets and read them aloud:

"Extra 1598 East has right over First No. 35, Eng. 1567 to Garden Grove and over second No. 35 Eng. unknown to Stanton."

"No. 2 Eng. 7711 will run two hours and thirty minutes late, Bloomfield to Warwick, two hours and twenty minutes late Warwick to Garden Grove, and two hours late, Garden Grove to Stanton."

Watch in hand, Speck slipped the dirty time card out of his hip pocket and studied it. Watch in hand, Hank Parsons studied the one tacked over his desk.

"We ought to make Garden Grove for both of 'em," said the old man.

"Fair enough."

SPECK climbed to the cupola, put the orders on the hook, hung his lantern outside on a nail in the wall. Old Hank worked on his reports until the jerking of the caboose, under the Swede's rough handling, forced him to quit. Then he, too, climbed to the cupola, loaded the cob pipe and lay back against the cushions, listening to the dreary miles unroll beneath their clacking wheels.

And the forty miles of the S. & S. crossing the Green River country between Warwick and Garden Grove is in-

deed dreary. From Logan, six miles out of Warwick, the steel bends down a heavy grade to Spencer, writhes through narrow, steep sided valleys, and along cavern pitted cliffs past Deepwater and the old village of Green River, and crawls out between scraggly hills to the flats at Garden Grove. The only open telegraph office is Spencer. The other three stations are "blind sidings".

The country is sparsely settled, a land of ill repute, to the stranger whose business is not known, a land of many entrances and few exits. By daylight, it is dreary; by moonlight, it is full of delightful mystery. Tonight, wrapped deep in the cloak of falling snow, it was a land invisible.

As they pulled away from the Warwick tank the fury of the storm seemed to increase. Before they had passed Logan, snow was whipping angrily back over the weaving tops of the string of empties, wind screaming at the cupola windows.

Speck yawned. It was almost one o'clock. The warmth from the caboose stove made him drowsy. In order to keep awake he drew back the cupola window and thrust his head out into the storm. As the cold air whipped in he sniffed suspiciously, leaned out of the window and sniffed again. There was a taint of burning grease.

He cursed softly, jerked the window shut and swung down to the caboose floor. Old Hank knocked the ashes from his pipe. Speck went to the rear platform of the caboose and closed the door behind him. Here he stood for a full minute, peering ahead. The odor was stronger. There was no mistaking it. Somewhere on his string of empties was a hot journal box—an axle hot enough to burn.

He reentered the caboose, stood beside the stove and lighted a cigaret. From the odor that box must be almost blazing. To stop and fix it would be no pleasant task. To run it was dangerous. Before they reached Garden Grove, more than thirty miles away, the Big Swede would have burned it off and wrecked the train. Speck wondered how there could possibly be a hot box on this string of light cars. There had been no warning odor at Warwick. While he was debating what to do, Old Hank thrust his head down from the cupola and yelled harshly—

"What's the matter now?"

"We've got a hot 'un over there somewhere."

The old man jerked open his cupola window and sniffed. Then, slamming it shut, he came down from the cupola, raving.

"I'll say we've got a hot one! Hotter'n the ribs of Satan! And you looked this train over at Warwick!"

"I sure did. I went till I met Whitey. We looked over both sides from hog to crummy. There was nothin'—"

"You're a damn liar, Mason. I'll bet you never got ten feet from the front platform. Brakeman! You call yourself a brakeman, an' pass up a journal burnin' off at a water tank! Bah! I'm goin' to turn you in fer that as soon as I ever git to Bloomfield."

Speck's big fists opened and shut. His knuckles ached again. The old man went out on the platform and, coming back inside, reached for the conductor's valve. Speck held his breath. When Hank pulled that valve and set the brakes on a hundred empties tipping over Green River Hill, he stood to pull out a half dozen drawbars, to tear the train into pieces and make more work for the crew. But there was no other way to get a signal to the head end.

Air purred slowly from the port. The brakes took hold. The engineer whistled three times. Hank let the valve back into place and the train came to a stop in a lonely draw, eight miles from Spencer.

While it was stopping, Speck took the dope bucket from the locker, filled a pail with water from the barrel beneath the cupola, and collected his packing tools. Then he looked at his watch. It was an hour and ten minutes yet until No. 2 was due behind him. Still, knowing the flagging rule, he turned to Old Hank.

"Do you want me to go back flaggin'?" he asked in a smothered tone.

"Do I want you to go back flaggin'!" Old Hank whirled on him scathingly. "What the hell do you think *I* want *you* to flag. You know there's nothin' between us an' 2. An' if you can't fix a hot box in three quarters of an hour, you'd—"

Speck was already heading for the door. Outside, he hurried forward, carrying two pails and a lantern. Snow beat into his face. Cold bit at his fingers and drove swirling flakes down the neck of his sheepskin. The odor of burning grease became stronger, and thirty cars from the caboose he came in sight of a cloud of blue rising from a journal box to lose itself in the swirl.

Striding into the midst of the smoke, Speck set down the pails and fumbled with the packing hook for the lid of the box. The hook went through thin air where it should have struck metal. The lid of the box was already lifted.

"Now what the—" he began.

Then, turning his head, he glanced about him with an uneasy feeling which increased as he thrust the hook into the box. Where there should have been two gallons of grease waste, a scant handful mixed with sand and grit now smoldered. Some one had pulled the lubricant from that box and sprinkled in sand after he had inspected the train at Warwick. Once more he recalled the shadows he had seen at Bloomfield. . . .

HE DASHED water upon the hot metal until it stopped smoking, picked up his lantern and looked at the bearing cap. The cap was cracked into a dozen pieces, the babbit all melted. He scratched the polished axle with the hook. The journal was in fair condition. Except for the broken cap, it would run to Spencer, possibly to Stanton. Now there was absolutely nothing to do except go back to the caboose, bring over a load of heavy tools, take out the old bearing and put in a new one. With a muttered curse, he picked up his water pail and, leaving the other material he had brought, hurried away to the caboose.

When he swung to the forward platform Old Hank was waiting for him.

"Well?" The old man's voice was a rasp.

"Got it to brass," returned Speck shortly.

The old conductor gave one angry snort and, stamping into the caboose, burst into another torrent of invective.

"The hell we have! A hundred cars—snowin' to beat the devil—two student brakemen—a student fireman—a student hoghead—an' then cap it all by gittin' a hot box on an empty a thousand miles from a side track! Damn such a railroad! I'm—"

While Old Hank talked, Speck jerked out the jack, the bar, the block, searched for the right size brass and slammed it down on the floor. Then he went to the locker, removed the .38 and slipped it into his coat pocket. The old man buttoned his leather jacket and watched the performance.

"What the devil you takin' that gat along for?" he rasped. "Gittin' afraid of the dark?"

"I'm takin' it to shoot snow birds with," said Speck.

The old man snorted. Speck gathered up the tools and started for the front door. Old Hank took part of the load and trudged along behind him. When they reached the bad order car, Hank and Speck found Whitey Rohr there waiting for them.

"What *you* doin' back here, student?" inquired the conductor.

"Come back to see what was wrong with you fellows," returned Whitey.

"Well," growled Old Hank, "you might jist as well beat it on back to the engine. You ain't no use here."

Whitey turned and walked away. When he had gone two car lengths, the old man called to him:

"Hi, there, student, you tell that lunkhead I'll turn some air outa the train line whenever I get ready for him to go. An' you tell him to ball the jack out of here, too. We're goin' to be on short time ahead of 2."

The brakeman trudged away through the snow. Speck jacked up the wheel, exchanged brasses, let it down again and filled the box with packing. Old Hank was holding the lantern for him. Both faced the train. They did not hear the stealthy steps coming up the dump close behind them.

Old Hank commenced gathering up tools to return to the caboose. Speck, having slammed down the lid of the box, was in the act of reaching for his lantern when he was startled by the hoarse command:

"Reach for the roof, you birds! No foolin'!"

Dropping his tools, Old Hank whirled about and thrust his arms skyward. Speck straightened up slowly, wondering whether he dared make a break for the .38. He faced about, the right hand resting almost at the edge of the pocket; but when his eyes passed over the figures of two men advancing menacingly up the dump, the one with a leveled automatic, the other with a .45 revolver, he lifted his hands to the level of his shoulders and stared at them, his eyes blazing.

They were unmasked. In the dim light the one appeared to be a heavy jowled, broad shouldered hillman with a deep scar in the middle of his forehead. He wore faded blue overalls, a duck coat and heavy shoes. The other was dressed in stylish corduroys, with laced boots, a corduroy cap and kid gloves. His mouth was twisted in an ugly sneer. His close set eyes peered from narrow slits.

"Frisk them birds, Jake," he commanded hoarsely.

Jake! The name sent gooseflesh creeping up Speck Mason's spine. Jake the Killer had been in the holdup at Lead Hill that afternoon. Speck recalled the shadows which he had seen in the Bloomfield yard, recalled that within twenty miles his train would cross Green River near the rendezvous of the Green River gang.

Jake slipped the .45 single action into his pocket, ran experienced hands over Speck, found the .38, showed it to his partner with a grunt of satisfaction and tossed it contemptuously into a snow drift. Then he whirled the brakeman roughly about, facing the box car, and turned to the conductor.

"You dirty devils—" sputtered Old Hank as Jake slipped a heavy hand under each armpit.

"Shut your trap!" snarled his captor. "If you open it ag'in, I'll stop it with a bullet."

Jake peeled off Old Hank's coat and tossed it in the snow at his partner's feet.

"Here, take this back to Shorty," he ordered.

Taking a stout cord from his pocket, and tying the old man's hands behind his back, Jake shoved him beside Speck and yanked out the .45.

"Now listen, you birds," he said, giving Speck a jab in the ribs. "We mean business, Savvy? We ain't goin' to stand for no foolin'. We want this train stopped so's the sixth car ahead of this one's ferninst the big cave at the west end of Green River bridge. We—"

"You got the wrong men, brother." Speck broke in coolly. "The train crew can't stop a string of cars like this. You want the hoghead."

"Naw, we don't want no hoghead, neither," said the man in corduroys. "We've seen a railroad before we come to this lousy pike. You don't pull no stall on us about bein' able to stop a train from the hind end. You can stop it just as well as the hoghead can. An' *you're* the bird that's goin' to do the stoppin'. Here, Jake, take this lantern with you."

JAKE picked up Speck's lantern, and with the man in corduroys driving the two men ahead of him, trudged alongside the train until he reached the Erie car. Its door was open. Jake stopped beside it, set the lantern within and, catching Old Hank by the knees, heaved him face down in the straw and commenced tying his feet together.

Hank sputtered and cursed. Jake snatched out the .45 and crashed it into his back.

"Shut up!" he snarled.

Old Hank complied.

While Speck stood with uplifted hands, he heard groans coming from the forward end of the car—groans which dispelled any doubt which might have lingered in his mind. Beyond question, they were in the hands of the gang who had held up the Lead Hill passenger train and had already murdered four trainmen that day. For some reason, the gang had abandoned the car and, trusting to the false scent they had left to throw the searchers off the trail, had brazenly ridden the Lead Hill local into the terminal and headed back out on the night drag to their Green River rendezvous.

The two men on the ground were evidently Jake the Killer and Chicago Lou, and the wounded one in the car was Shorty Ferona. Now they wanted the car in which the wounded Ferona lay spotted so that removal of the critically injured man into their stronghold would be easy.

The man in corduroys, having tossed Old Hank's coat into the car, peered at Speck through the dim light.

"Pull off that coat, brakie," he ordered.

Speck hesitated. Chicago Lou jabbed him with the automatic. Speck stripped off the coat. The gangster tossed it inside.

Speck was seeing red. He scarcely noticed the biting wind which cut through his thin cotton shirt and sifted snow down his neck. His blue eyes were blazing. His teeth were clamped down like the jaws of a vise. His sledge hammer fists were clenched.

Chicago Lou looked at him and laughed.

"Outa them boots an' pants, too," he said. "We need 'em."

Speck stood with bared teeth, poised to spring. As he was in the act of throwing the whole weight of his hundred and ninety pounds of bone and brawn against the gangster, he felt the muzzle of Jake's gun in the small of his back. The cold metal sobered him. He relaxed. Chicago Lou laughed tauntingly and, while Speck stripped off boots and trousers, gave Jake final instructions.

"Now you take little Pinkey back to the doghouse with you an' make him stop this train at Green River. I'm keepin' the old one here with me an' Shorty, see? Pinkey can't git away from you. If he gits foxy, give 'im the works. If he's a good little boy an' don't give us no trouble, maybe we'll let him have his gran'pa down at the bridge. If he ain't—"

The bandit's ferret eyes wore a look which boded no good to Old Hank Parsons.

On the way back to the caboose, Speck, with hands above his head, was driven through the snow which was now six or eight inches deep on the level, drifted in places above the knees. It numbed his bare feet. Biting wind cut through his underwear and whipped the tail of his cotton shirt about his thighs.

But Speck Mason was not thinking of the discomfort of wind and cold and snow. Inwardly he was boiling—raging. To be cursed by a conductor was bad enough. To be held up, stripped of clothes and driven at the point of a gun through the snow, was unendurable. Only the occasional prod of the .45 restrained him from whirling about and settling the matter then and there. For that prod reminded him that he was in the hands of Jake the Killer. Jake the Killer would balk at nothing. A wrong move would mean instant death. His only hope for revenge lay in waiting for the breaks of the game.

They reached the caboose. Speck eased up the platform with Jake directly behind him.

"No monkey business, now, fella!" warned the Killer. "You git this train goin'. Git it goin' quick an' keep it goin' till you git to the stoppin' place. For if you don't—"

Speck said nothing. He stood sullenly in the center of the caboose floor. Jake came angrily toward him.

"I told you to git this train goin'," he snarled. "You do it."

"I can't git it goin' without usin' my hands," said Speck.

"What's that?"

"It's dark. You can't pass a signal through a mile of snow. The hogger don't know we're ready to leave. I've got to take that little handle and turn some air out of the train line for a signal."

Speck nodded toward the conductor's valve at the forward end of the caboose. Jake eyed him suspiciously.

"Well, git it an' get goin'. If you try any monkey business, I'll fill your hide so full of holes it won't hold shucks."

Speck stepped forward and opened the conductor's valve. Air hissed and spewed. The pressure on the gage dropped from ninety pounds to eighty-five. He closed the valve. Soon the two long blasts of the whistle, sounding faint and far away, told him that the engineer had got the signal.

And at that instant, there came a glimmer of hope to Speck Mason. His blue eyes glowed with a cunning light. The slack was bunched in a hundred empties. When that slack went out . . .

He turned to face the Killer, hands still uplifted. Jake was looking straight ahead, his body swaying gently, his coarse features set in an ugly leer. There came a rattling, jamming sound as the Big Swede took the slack out of the train. Speck, facing forward, leaned backward to meet it. The gangster, in imitation, leaned backward also. Speck's eyes became bits of steel. He measured the distance to the Killer's chin . . .

THE RATTLING, jamming sound came rapidly nearer. The Big Swede was taking it all. Speck could have blessed him for rough handling. The caboose leaped forward; Jake jerked backward. He pressed the trigger of the .45. A spurt of yellow flame leaped from its muzzle. A bullet nicked Speck Mason's right ear. As the gangster threw out both arms in a frantic effort to regain his balance, Speck struck a crashing blow which sent him hurtling backward into the end wall of the jerking caboose.

Speck followed him—went down with him. The gun struck the locker and slipped out of sight behind the seat cushion, leaving the two men with nothing more than bare fists. Now toe to toe, they slammed into each other. Now down in tangled heap they wallowed in their own blood like battling wolves, biting, gouging, clawing.

Speck's thin union suit was torn to shreds. Blood streamed from his splinter scored back and oozed from a swelling face. All the lust for combat which he had been suppressing since he had come home and taken the job with Old Hank Parsons, he was now satisfying to utter fullness—not upon the person of the old conductor, but upon their common enemy.

The train gathered speed. The caboose reeled and rocked and rattled. The Killer came uppermost, gripped Speck's throat in a paralyzing clutch. Speck felt his eyes bulging from their sockets. With a mighty surge and heave, he tore loose from the heavy hands, hurled the Killer from him and staggered to his feet, balancing himself against the swaying, rocking motion of the now rapidly moving caboose.

The gangster reeled up from the floor, blood streaming from his face. He staggered unsteadily toward the rear. Speck shook his towsled head, dashed a hand across his misty eyes, advanced slowly.

Jake was easing back between the two bunkers. His half blinded, wavering eyes traveled furtively along the cushion. They caught the glint of blued steel. He took a step forward. Speck swung to meet him. The Killer did not strike. He ducked and dodged. Speck passed him, turned to see him whirl, make a quick stab toward the gun, and came to his feet, driven by hate and fear and lust for blood, the weapon clutched in his right hand.

The caboose swayed, rocked from side to side, leaped forward, lurched back. As it snapped forward Speck leaped, grabbed the gun hand. For a full minute the two

men stood swaying in a death grapple, Speck trying to secure the .45, the Killer maneuvering to place a death shot. The caboose leaped again. The gangster lost his balance. Speck lashed out with his right hand, spun the Killer halfway across the caboose, and ended the fight with a crash of the gun barrel against Jake's skull, which left him lying senseless on the floor.

Gripping the heavy weapon in both hands, the brakeman sat down beside the stove. He was trembling. During the ten years he had been a boomer he had fought for revenge, for love, for money, for the sheer love of fighting; but fighting for life was a new experience. He had forgotten, during this fight, the time, the place, the circumstance. Half dazed, he stared down at the distorted features of Jake the Killer, lying, arms outstretched, in a pool of blood.

The caboose sang a sodden, monotonous song on the yielding joints. It plunged forward, surged back, careened to the right, jerked sharply to the left, jostling the inert body. The Killer moaned and mumbled a curse.

Speck drew a torn sleeve across his mouth. It came away bloody. Out of the night and the storm came the scream of the engine whistle, sounding the signal for Spencer; and, following the station signal, one short, screaming blast—signal for a meeting point. Speck came to his feet, eyes wide, the blood draining from his freckled face.

"My God!" he whispered. "Are—are we headin' in here for 2?"

In the heat of the struggle he had completely forgotten the passenger train following him. He had forgotten that Old Hank Parsons, bound hand and foot, was being held by Chicago Lou in the Erie car as a hostage. He had forgotten that the bandit leader had sent him back to the caboose, in charge of Jake Thomas, with orders to stop this train at Green River Bridge; and that if he failed—if the train stopped a mile too soon or a mile too late—Old Hank Parsons, the hostage, would die.

Speck fumbled for the leather strap which served him as a watch chain. The watch was gone. It was in an overall pocket in the Erie.

The slack was bunching in the train as the Big Swede sloughed air, stopping for the west switch at Spencer. Speck, for once losing his head, darted frantically back to the rear door, torn underwear flapping about his half bare legs. If this train stopped here, Chicago Lou would miss his partner, would become suspicious and then . . .

"Poor Old Hank!"

He remembered that Old Hank had wanted to hold the rope which hanged the murderers of Cap Rawlins. Those murderers might, within the hour, make *him* a victim. Speck's hands were shaking as he opened his locker and fumbled in it for serge trousers and light shoes. While he groped about, there came two short blasts from the whistle; and the caboose jerked forward as the train gathered speed.

Wondering if the dispatcher had put out new orders for them, he backed from the locker and slipped the serge trousers over his torn underwear. Once more the whistle sounded. The exhaust deepened. The clack of joints grew more rapid. They were not heading in at Spencer, after all. They were going through.

HE SEIZED his lantern and started for the rear door. As he passed the desk, he snatched a pencil and a piece of clip and wrote a brief message to the operator—a message which showed that his brain, trained by years to meet emergency with quick thought, was once more working. The piece of clip, when he folded it, bore three scrawls, "Hold No. 2 . . ."

He thrust it into the order hoop, which the old conductor always kept for emergency, and leaped for the rear platform. The operator, half hidden in the whirl of snow, stood beside the track, in his right hand a lighted lantern, in his left—though Speck could not see it—an order hoop. As the caboose flashed past,

Speck dropped the hoop containing his message at the operator's feet, and in the same sweep thrust his arm instinctively through the one which held the order.

He remained on the rear platform of the caboose until the operator lifted his lantern in signal that the message had been received; for without that assurance, Speck would not have dared leave his post of duty—leave his train unprotected by flag with a passenger train crashing sixty miles an hour into a snowstorm, behind it. And the plan of rescue which he had formed to save Old Hank would take him far from the rear.

He reentered the caboose, read the order, felt for the missing watch, and swore. But over his swollen face, with the blood oozing from a dozen cuts and bruises, came the shadow of a smile.

He lifted the lid of the strong locker and, taking out a piece of stout cord, tied the Killer's hands and feet. The injured man moaned and struggled. With hands and feet securely bound, Speck yanked the fellow roughly along the floor to the ladder leading up to the cupola, and tied him to the bottom rung.

His next move was to get more clothing. He opened his own locker. In it was one thin denim jumper. He slipped this on over his cotton shirt. Beneath him rolling wheels rumbled. The Big Swede was wheeling the string of empties down the valley at thirty-five miles an hour into the teeth of a stiff northeast wind. The frozen tops would be bitter cold to a man clad only in serge trousers, cotton shirt and denim jumper.

He shot a glance at Old Hank's locker, picked up the hatchet and caved in the door. In this locker was another denim jumper, mate to his own.

He glanced down at Jake. The Killer wore a heavy duck coat. Speck shook his head. To get that coat would require two precious minutes—two minutes which might mean life to Old Hank Parsons, for already the Big Swede was yanking the train over the bridge two miles out of Spencer.

Speck crossed to the desk and picked up the old man's flashlight. Then he broke the Killer's .45. In the chamber were one empty shell and five loads. He slipped the weapon into his pocket and, leaving the lantern on the floor, started from the caboose.

Halfway across the floor he turned back to the desk and, taking up the switch list which the conductor had so painstakingly made out, counted up the column of car initials. Thirty-fifth from the bottom was the Erie—the only Erie on the sheet. In the column headed "kind" was the old man's cramped "A". That was the car whose exact position he needed to know. Erie Auto—thirty-five deep from the caboose.

Slipping the list back on the desk, he climbed through the cupola window and swung out on top. It was like a plunge into an icy river. The racing wind stabbed through his thin clothing like a million frozen needles. He switched on the light and, bracing himself against the rock and roll of the caboose, struck boldly into the cutting blast.

In fair weather the walk over those thirty-five reeling tops, even though they were cavorting and swaying and bucking like broncos under spur, would have been but another incident in the day's work. Trainmen who ride the night freights think nothing of it. Speck would have made it easily in five or six minutes. But tonight, stiffened with cold, sore from his fight; with roofs and running boards covered from front to rear in ice and snow; with a fifty-mile headwind whipping snow and sleet into his eyes until he could not see ten feet in front of his nose, it was another matter.

If he made the trip from the caboose to the Erie in the twenty-five minutes which still remained to him, he would do well. He might never make it. Only a fighter would have tried.

He reached the forward end of the caboose. There was a gap three feet wide—a writhing, reeling crevice, black as ink. Beneath it rolling wheels pounded steel rails. Speck hesitated, measured the distance with his eye, balanced him-

self to hold footing on the icy boards, and sprang across. He landed, slipped, hung balanced for a second, then, righting himself, beat his way with lowered head into the wind.

At the center of the fourth car he switched off his light, and turned back for a look at the marker on the caboose. It was still discernible as a green glow. From the fifth he could not see a glimmer. Turning, he hurried on.

WALKING those tops was a bitter struggle, Speck pitting his skill and strength against the fury of the storm and the plunge of the speeding train. Time and again, as the cars heeled far out and shifted back on curve and tangent, he was thrown off the level running board to the sloping roof. Beneath him flanges squealed; drawbars rattled; cars jumped and dodged and countered. The novice would long ago have been hurled down to a bleeding, freezing eternity. Every step was a brazen dare to death. But not once did he think of turning back, or remember that Old Hank was the man who had sent him booming; the man whom he hated worse than poison. He struggled forward, counting cars as he went.

At ten car lengths his fingers were stiff and numb; at fifteen his feet were leaden slabs which he dragged uncertainly over the snowy cars and lifted painfully across the yawning gaps between; at twenty his thighs were pricked with freezing needles.

As he stumbled across the twenty-second coupling, the Big Swede whistled for Deepwater and rumbled through. It was nine miles from Deepwater to Green River—fifteen or sixteen minutes at most. Before him were thirteen cars yet to cross; but the real test had not begun.

At the twenty-eighth car, Speck turned off the flashlight and thrust it into his left hip pocket. If Old Hank came out of that Erie alive, it would be only because Speck took Chicago Lou by surprise. Lou would reckon him under guard in the caboose. To display a single glimmer of light within sight of that Erie car would put the bandit on his guard.

With the light gone, the storm seemed augmented in all its fury. The wind howled more loudly; the cars swayed more threateningly. Speck tried to walk upright on the boards, but he had lost all sense of direction. The car lurched right. His foot slipped off the running board. His left knee gave way. He fell flat on his back, slipping, sliding over the sloping roof toward the eaves of the reeling car, and the river surging far below.

His heart came into his throat. His feet were over empty space. Slowly his body was skidding out toward the flying rocks or the cold black water. With a desperate effort, he whirled himself catlike on his face, clawed madly for a hold. He felt the ice slide beneath his stiffening fingers. He thrashed about for a new hold. His fingers found a crack in the running board. He gripped—gripped for life. The Big Swede was wheeling down the valley at forty-five miles an hour. The car plunged and quivered. His hold slipped. He grabbed again, dragged himself back to the middle of the car, clung tremblingly for a moment, only to be again up and on his way.

He tried to stand upon his feet. It was useless. With his light gone, he had lost his sense of balance and could not make it. Walking, he would go down at the first coupling, even if he could stay upon the running boards that far.

Dropping to his knees, he "cooned" his way along the icy boards. The ice and sleet and snow were rough. They tore away the knees of his trousers. They bit at his freezing flesh, leaving a trail of crimson where he had gone.

He could not see his hand before his face. Only by touch could he tell when he had reached the end of one car and must cross to the next. The first coupling was easy. The cars were of almost equal height. Holding tightly by his left hand to the brace strap on the running board, he reached across with the right and gripped the corresponding strap on the

car ahead. For a moment, he clung like a squirrel to an icy limb, then slid like a snake across the thundering gap and hurried along the car ahead.

At every coupling, death reached up an icy hand, clutched at his swaying body, tried to drag him down beneath the growling wheels. A broken bolt, a rotten board, a slip of his freezing hands, and Speck Mason would be forever home from his wandering.

The Big Swede whistled for crossings. Speck heard as one in a dream. He was counting the cars as he cooned along them—

"Twenty-nine — thirty — thirty-one — thirty-two."

Two more cars and then the Erie. He reached the forward end of the thirty-second car, felt across in the darkness for the next. His hand found only empty space. He reached down—*down!* Two feet below he touched the running board. The next car was a low one. He hung over the space, trying to get a grip.

To leap off into the night, and risk keeping his balance on its top, would be little short of suicide. He grasped the brace strap. The strain was almost too great. His grip was precarious. For a moment reaching out and down, he clung like a trick rider, balancing on two racing horses of different height, differently gaited. As the car he rode swung to the right, the one he sought to gain dodged left. He was slipping, falling. To release his hold upon the forward car meant death. His body was sliding down. He swung, struggled, scrambled—bruising his body against the rough end of the car —and crawled to safety upon the frozen top.

"Thirty-three — thirty-four," he counted. The next should be the Erie. Its roof should be high. He wondered tremulously if he had lost count in the grilling drive. He crept to the end, reached out—out and up. This car was fully three feet higher than the one he rode. It was the Erie.

Moving now with redoubled caution, Speck worked his way up the end ladder to the running board and along it to the center of the car. He felt in his pocket for his flashlight. It was not there. Somewhere in the mad scramble, he had lost it.

He felt for the .45, slipped it out of his pocket and, gripping it tightly, crawled head down to the center door. He felt along the track. The door was closed. Chicago Lou was keeping out the cold.

Speck listened. There was no sound from within, but the odor of cigaret smoke filtered up through the cracks in the car door.

The Big Swede whistled for Green River—whistled through. Speck was trembling. He wondered what Chicago Lou would do when he found the train was not stopping at the bridge. The engineer whistled again. The train thundered out over the bridge and crashed through the switches beyond.

There was a grating of steel on steel. The door opened. The hoarse voice of the bandit leader, cursing, came up to him. He drew back the hammer of the gun—Jake the Killer's .45—reached far out into space. The tip of a cigaret glowed for one puff. He aimed squarely at the glow. The car rocked and jostled on a curve. He pressed the trigger. There was a deafening roar . . .

The cigaret stub wobbled and fell into the straw. There was a startled cry, a bitter oath. A second later, two shots from an automatic crashed and two spurts of orange flame burst from the forward end of the car. The bullets struck the steel frame of the car door and ricocheted away into the night.

Speck lay still. The gun was silent. Chicago Lou would be crouched in the car, waiting. Presently he fired again. There was no answer.

Speck wondered if the bandit were dead or if he lay crouched within, waiting for a movement. Perhaps he was creeping forward to make good his threat against the life of the conductor. Once more he fired into the forward end of the car. Again no answer.

Slipping the gun into his pocket, Speck turned his hands outward, gripped the

track on which the door slid, swung himself out and down. He half expected to hear the sharp report of the automatic, to see the spurt of orange flame, to feel the stab of burning lead. But nothing happened.

His body struck with a dull thud—struck not wood nor straw but human flesh—the body of Chicago Lou, who had been creeping back to Old Hank's end of the car. There was a grunt of surprise, one quick report; and the next instant Speck found himself for the second time that night gripped in deadly struggle with a killer.

THE MILE of empties dragged into the east bound passing track at Garden Grove. Five minutes after she had cleared the switch, the target behind was still red. The switch had not been closed.

On the west bound passing track, six or seven car lengths away, first No. 35, her engine crew still unaware that No. 2 was being held at Spencer on Speck's message, was headed in awaiting orders. The engineer, watching the red light, called across the cab to his fireman:

"Hi, there, kid! That outfit of deadheads has gone to sleep in the caboose an' left that switch open behind 'em. You hightail it over there an' shut it before 2 comes tearin' outa this snow an' plows into 'em."

Quickly lighting a torch, the fireman crossed the tracks to the caboose. Yelling fit to wake the dead, he swung up on the forward platform and opened the front door. He started back. Chairs were overturned. Seat cushions were scattered about. The floor was smeared with blood from end to end. Jake the Killer, straining and cursing, was tied to the cupola ladder.

The fireman stood for a second, open mouthed; then, forgetting the open switch, he raced back across the track to call the hoghead. The hogger followed him over to the caboose. They questioned Jake as to the cause of the trouble. The Killer sulked, refused to talk.

While they were still questioning him the train crew from first No. 35, led by Whitey Rohr, rushed back to know why the message on No. 2, and why the delay.

Leaving the Killer where he was, they closed the switch, and hurried forward, three men on each side of the train. At the open door of the Erie, they stopped, scrambled inside to investigate.

Speck Mason, Jake's old .45 clutched in his hand, was slowly recovering from a nasty blow on the head. Across him, Chicago Lou lay in a huddle, dead. In the rear end, half frozen but still cursing, was Old Hank Parsons. In the forward end, Shorty Ferona, with two leather coats spread over him, was cold and stiff. The living were rushed to the hospital, the dead to the morgue; and by daylight traffic was moving through the storm . . .

Prospects are now that Speck Mason, the boomer, is home to stay. When he and Old Hank got the frost thawed out of their frozen hands and feet they met one day down at the trainmaster's office.

"I reckon you come down to turn me in for runnin' that hot box by a water tank, did you, Hank?" inquired Speck, with an Irish grin.

The old man snorted in disgust, tamped a load in his old cob pipe and rasped out—

"Hell, no!" He took a few reflective puffs, blew clouds of smoke into the air, and continued:

"I've been huntin' for a hind brakeman that was a brakeman ever since I been runnin' a train for this S. & S. I've come up to ask Mr. Warren if he could fix it up someways so you could hold that hind end job with me reg'lar."

Warren chuckled.

"I reckon, Hank," he said dryly, "there won't be much competition if you want him. The only way I've ever been able to keep a brakeman with you at all has been to threaten to fire him for refusin' to go out with you."

Speck took the job. One never can tell about these boomers.

Beginning a Novel of the

DEATH IN TIGER VALLEY

By REGINALD CAMPBELL

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF THE TIGRESS

I AWOKE with a start, and sat upright in my narrow camp bed. Beyond the dark arch of my tent the jungle clearing glimmered faintly under the pale rays of a cloudless moon. Away over to the left of the clearing I could see the bamboo stockade I had built for the protection of my two ponies. In contrast with the whiteness on the open sward the surrounding forest was black as pitch.

I listened to the silence. The night was so still that my ears buzzed from pure lack of sound. Why had sleep left me so suddenly? Why was my skin prickling and my heart drumming so violently? Nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard, yet I knew fear.

Somewhere inside the tent my gun case lay on the ground sheet. Before I could shoot I would have to leave my bed, light a hurricane lantern, unstrap the case, assemble the parts of the gun, find my ball cartridges and load. Hopeless!

My right hand stole under the pillow and I felt the comforting touch of my revolver. With my left hand I cautiously loosened the ends of the mosquito net which were tucked in under my thin mattress. Having made an opening through the net, I slipped out feet first and stood upright on the ground beside the bed. My revolver at the ready, I now waited, but for what or whom did I wait?

And then she came. She came with an oily glide, and halted right in the center of the open space before my tent. She looked much darker than I would have imagined, for the tawny coat lacked color in the eery rays of the moon, and the stripes were like smears of blood. She turned her head, and the cold, callous ferocity of the ringed face made me catch my breath sharply. I raised my revolver.

No; I wouldn't aim at her; that would be madness. A revolver, unless at point blank range, could do nothing more than wound, and the charge of a wounded tigress is second to nothing in horror. But I wanted noise more than anything else on earth, and the firing of my revolver would break the terrifying silence.

I was about to squeeze the trigger, when the tigress whirled and charged

Siamese Jungle

away from the stockade toward the rim of the encircling jungle.

I guessed the reason for her charge. Unseen enemies might be lurking to disturb her from her prey, and she was stunning them into submission by sheer ferocity. Nerves. She was all nerves and strength and terror as she stood there bathed in the light of the moon.

I heard Sunstar and my black pony plunging with fright inside the stockade. The tigress pricked her ears, one paw came off the ground, and on the remaining three she swayed backward and forward as if pulled by invisible wires. That meant an immediate charge at the stockade.

My revolver roared into the air, and I let forth a yell that would have startled the devil himself. Then I blinked, for the clearing was empty.

I ran out of the tent and shouted for my servants and coolies. They were in smaller tents set beneath trees on the opposite side of the clearing, and shortly, headed by my dear old Lao cook, whose face was the color of grass, they came running toward me.

I caught sight of my syce among the

sea of brown faces and beckoned to him. Together we swung open the door of the stockade and dashed inside to quiet the ponies. The syce took the black, and I went to my favorite, Sunstar. As I ran my hand over him I felt that he was lathered in sweat and trembling in every limb, but my presence soon made him happy again, and after rubbing him down I left both him and the black to the care of the syce and returned to the clearing.

The whole of the open space was now lighted by huge fires, and in the dancing light my coolies and servants were chattering like so many badly frightened monkeys. There would be no more sleep for me that night, I reflected, and accordingly I strode back to my tent, where I gave up my mind to the sudden problem presented by the coming of the tigress.

Around me stretched the forest in which I had worked as a teak-walla for nine whole years. I had camped in every part of it, and though I sometimes erected stockades for my ponies in places where tiger or panther were known to be plentiful, never before had my camp been openly attacked by any wild animal. The tigress, therefore, must be some exceptionally daring brute, and the sooner her career was cut short the better it would be for the whole of the jungle community. Ralph Grainger, I mused, would be the very man to help me in rounding her up, and to him I would ride directly dawn brought an end to the long hours of the anxious night.

GRAINGER was a teak-walla like myself and, since the forest leased by his company lay on the opposite bank of the river Mae Fah that ran near my camp, we naturally saw a good deal of each other. Our meetings invariably ended in high worded argument, but in reality a deep, unspoken friendship existed between us; and I knew that his help would be mine for the asking.

I spent the rest of the night in my chair, and at the first signs of dawn ate a hasty breakfast, then rode Sunstar out to the river. Downstream, four miles to the south, lay the compound and bungalow which constituted my headquarters, and to which under normal circumstances I would have been returning today. Grainger's bungalow, however, was situated as many miles upstream on the opposite bank, and so, much to the disgust of Sunstar, whose mind was running on his comfortable stable in my compound, I urged him through the shallow water and up a tiny path that ran to the north.

The month was December, and the morning clear and cold. Light mists lay on the river, but soon the sun dispersed them and the stream shone like silver. Dew from the fringing jungle pattered on my helmet and reins; the wind, untainted by civilization, tasted of absolute purity, and I drank great gulps of it into my lungs; kingfishers, all blue and cold, poised, darted and screamed; in contrast with the grimness of the past night, the air was full of life and color, and I hummed a lively tune as jungle and river swept past me.

After half an hour's ride Grainger's bungalow which, like mine, was built on tall posts to protect it from the rains, came into view on my right. I'd feared he might be away inspecting some remote part of his forest, but as I entered his tiny compound I saw him on the veranda, smoking an after-breakfast cigaret. I dismounted, threw Sunstar's reins to a coolie who came running up, and climbed up the steps to the bungalow.

"Hello, Foster, you great oaf," were his first words. "Why so bright and early this morning?"

"Tiger," I replied, sinking into a chair. "Or rather a tigress." And I told him the events of the previous night.

When I had finished speaking he sprang from his seat and began striding up and down the veranda. His dark, handsome face was flushed with excitement, and his eyes were glittering. He walked with a lithe, springy stride that reminded me of the very brute we were discussing, for his movements were quick and nervous, yet full of latent power.

"You would have the luck—" He swung round and towered over my chair.

"Luck?" I echoed.

"Yes. I'd have given a hundred pounds to have seen that tigress come into the clearing. But you wouldn't understand. You've no imagination, Foster."

"I've enough imagination to know that I felt in the dickens of a funk," I told him.

"Funk? Ye gods! I'd have been in such a funk that I'd have had the thrill of my life."

"Well, every man to his taste," I said, rather evading the point. I was never much of a hand at these sort of discussions.

"Tigers," went on Grainger. "I could watch 'em for hours if I had the chance. Remember that one I shot last year? I saw him kill a bullock the day before I got him, and he broke its neck as easily as I'd snap a twig. And then he danced—danced, man, on all four paws at once, so that he went up and down in the air like an India rubber ball. Now why do you think he did that?"

"You can ask me another," I replied. "I'm no authority on tigers."

"And neither am I, you great pachyderm; but I can at least see farther than my nose. He was dancing because he was pleased with himself. He was pleased with his size and his strength and, by Jove, he *was* a size. He'd got the strength of a Samson, the grace of a deer and the swiftness of a falcon. He was a killing machine, in fact, the most marvelous killing machine that's ever been made. Tigers? They fascinate me."

I couldn't help shivering as I thought of last night's tigress. She, too, had resembled some frightful killing machine, but it needed a man like Grainger to bring the truth home to me.

"Let's cut out the cackle," I said after a pause, "and get down to brass tacks. You're a better shot than I am, and you've a high velocity rifle into the bargain. I propose therefore that you ride back with me to my camp and we sit up over a live bait tonight. Exact spot to be arranged when we get there."

"I'd rather have a go at her on foot," said Grainger.

"Well, I wouldn't," I answered decidedly. "Besides, I must get back to my bungalow tomorrow. I've a lot of work to do there if we're to reach Cha Kum on Saturday in time for the beginning of the Christmas meeting."

"But supposing we don't bag the tigress tonight?"

"Then we have another shot at her directly the meeting's over."

"Right," said Grainger. "And we might as well have a bet on the result."

"But we're in on this together."

"Of course we are, but it's hardly likely that we'll both drop her dead, is it?"

"It's not. Still, I'm not taking any bets," I said shortly.

"Careful old soul, aren't you? Don't you ever get moved by anything? Don't you ever want to get drunk, or do something damned silly for a change?"

"Takes all sorts to make a world. We're not all like you, thank heavens."

"Look here, I'll give you odds of ten to one," he exclaimed. "If you fire the shot that kills her, I give you a hundred ticals. If I bag her, you give me ten. Wounding not to count."

"If I took the bet at all, I'd take it at evens," I told him.

"Would that be fair? When I've a rifle and you an old shot and ball gun that wouldn't hit an elephant at fifty yards?"

"That remains to be seen," I said. "And in any case, if we don't bag the tigress tonight, the chances are that I'll be able to borrow a rifle while we're in Cha Kum. We'll then be on the level after we get back."

"So you're taking the bet, then?"

"No; I'm not. And what's the point of a bet, anyhow?"

"To add a spice of interest to the affair."

"There's interest enough as it is."

"I suppose you're really afraid to risk your money."

I wouldn't be taunted any longer.

"All right, damn you," I cried, "I'll take your bet."

"Splendid. What odds?"

"Evens."

"Right. One hundred ticals then. Even odds. Done?"

"Done," said I.

HAD I known what the results of that bet were to be, I'd have sooner bitten out my tongue than said the word, but as it was we laughed and had a drink to clinch the matter. Grainger then went inside his bungalow to ferret out his rifle and cartridges, and as I gazed at his retreating form I found myself wondering why he and I got on so well together in spite of our outward talk.

He was the exact opposite of myself; perhaps that was the reason. I've been called heavy and slow, but Grainger was all nerves and excitement. He was the sort of man, in fact, whom you'd imagine to have been born in a thunderstorm. As for his moral character, he could be as cruel as Satan one minute, and as gentle as a woman the next. I suppose all of us have a lot of good and evil in us, with one or the other always fighting for the upper hand, but he went in for such violent contrasts that you never knew where you were with him. And yet, for all his faults, I liked the chap immensely, and when he returned with his rifle I felt that I could have had no better companion for the venture before us.

He leaned over the veranda railing and shouted to his syce to saddle his gray mare, then turned to me.

"How's Sunstar?" he asked.

"Fine, though he had a bit of a scare last night. How's the mare?"

"You'll see her in a minute. Foster, she'll run that Sunstar of yours off his legs in the Christmas polo."

"If you're trying to draw me on to another bet," I said, "you're wasting your time. One bet a day's enough for me."

He laughed, and together we walked down the steps to the compound, where our ponies awaited us.

I glanced at the gray mare, and the syce who was holding her. The syce was a villainous looking Kamoo with all the appearance of an ex-convict branded on his dusky features. He was, however, the only native capable of handling the mare, and for that reason Grainger had kept him. As for the mare herself, she was a wicked brute, with the devil in her eye and hoofs that were best avoided. Even the syce couldn't actually ride her, though with Grainger she was a different animal altogether. He could do anything with her, and I must say the pair of them made a wonderful sight. She was as fleet as a swallow, and he the most magnificent horseman I have ever seen, or hope to see. When he rode he seemed to be poured on to his horse, and he fairly took your breath away at polo.

"Come on," Grainger was saying. "I'll race you back to camp."

"Nothing doing," I replied, vaulting into the saddle. "Sunstar's had enough excitement as it is, and I want to keep him quiet. Don't mind a gallop for a mile, though."

With the syce, mounted on Grainger's dun pony, following at a slower pace behind us, Grainger and I thundered down the path toward my camp. And, as I guided Sunstar round the treacherous bends, I was conscious of a sudden, overwhelming excitement. Perhaps it was the feel of a good pony between my knees, perhaps it was the song of the wind that whistled past my topee; but whatever the cause I felt that adventure called, and now that the bet was clinched I wanted to win it. I'd be able to tell Mary Collins, too, exactly how I had shot that tigress.

Strange that I should have thought of her as I galloped along the bank of the sun kissed river.

CHAPTER II

THE VIGIL

THAT evening, shortly before dusk, found Grainger and myself lying on a bamboo platform built across the fork of a tree which overlooked a large natural forest clearing about a mile inland from

my camp. For safety's sake Grainger had sent back his ponies under the care of his syce, while I had dispatched the whole of my servants and coolies, together with Sunstar and the black, down to my headquarters in the south. This meant that both of us would have a five mile walk in the morning before we reached our respective bungalows, but to us in the teak trade these distances were nothing.

Beneath us, in the center of the clearing, an old bullock was tethered to a stake sunk in the ground. I hated to see a poor, harmless brute led out to slaughter, but the bullock I had selected from a neighboring village was old, worn out and covered with sores. The villagers, being Buddhists, would never kill an animal to put it out of suffering, and I reckoned that in this case a quick death would come as a merciful release.

Dusk fell, short and eery. The bullock, quite unperturbed, munched steadily at a bale of luscious grass provided for it. Soon its outline disappeared, and complete darkness cloaked the land.

Neither I nor my companion made the slightest move, for a tiger's hearing is so acute that the mere creaking of our platform would betray us. We lay on our bellies, side by side, peering over the edge of our *machan* and longing for the moon, which was shortly due, to rise.

Sounds, jungle sounds, began to quicken the quiet dark. A soughing of wings as some night bird passed, the harsh note of a barking deer, a squeak, a scuffle, tense silence, an atmosphere of waiting, the shrill, startling trumpet of a wild elephant, more tiny noises, then again that short but nerve wracking sense of waiting.

A white, ghostly glimmer pervaded the forest. It grew in strength till the clearing and the trees stood out in sharp black and white. The bullock stood there unharmed, yet I could have sworn that one of those sounds had heralded the coming of the tigress. It was nervous work, perched up on a tree miles away from the homeliness of even a jungle village; imagination was apt to run away with one, and I stared down at the moon drenched clearing with all the concentration I could muster.

By eight o'clock I was shivering with cold. In December the temperature cools off rapidly at night, with a drop of some forty degrees between dusk and dawn, and I knew that if the tigress didn't come early we'd be in for the deuce of an uncomfortable time. At half past eight the moon was suddenly obscured and, glancing overhead, I saw that clouds were gradually enveloping the whole sky, a most unusual occurence for this time of the year. Down in the clearing we could now make out nothing, and my heart sank, for we'd never see to shoot in that light. Even the bullock was indistinguishable against the blackness of the ground.

Five minutes later, to make matters worse, the leaves of the trees all round us started to patter ominously, and a heavy shower of rain descended. In the wet season we would have taken the precaution of making the coolies erect a thick leaf canopy over our heads, but now we were absolutely unprotected, and it wasn't long before I was soaked to the skin. To add to my discomfort, a small pool of water was collecting on the floor of the *machan* under my right side, and I was forced to move slightly away to the left. Careful though I was, the bamboo creaked under my weight, and I heard Grainger hiss an order for me to keep quiet. I was still pretty miserable, but I knew he was too, so I clenched my teeth against the cold and continued staring down at the well of darkness below us.

Some ten minutes after I had moved the rain ceased and a faint moon, though still partially obscured by a thin veil of cloud, wanly lighted our surroundings. By its light I saw that the bullock was now lying down and evidently asleep. The brute had had a good feed of grass, and accustomed as it was to being out in all weathers, the rain had made no difference to its slumbers. A touch of humor in that, I thought. Here was the intended victim wrapped in peaceful oblivion, while its executioners shivered in acute discomfort immediately above it.

We didn't see him for long, though, for the moon disappeared again and the confounded rain started heavier than ever. It was a cold, relentless downpour, coming straight from overhead, and by ten o'clock I was fairly chilled to the bone. I nudged Grainger.

"Any use staying any longer?" I whispered. "Rain's going on all night, as far as I can see."

"Damn it, aren't you game?" he whispered.

"What for? If the tigress does come, we can't see her in this light. I vote we leg it back to our bungalows right now. We don't want a good dose of malaria with the Christmas meeting just coming on."

"Perhaps you're right," he agreed reluctantly. "Switch on your torch and we'll climb down."

I had a flashlight torch with me, and together we clambered down the bamboo ladder which the coolies had run up the tree. Once on the ground I rayed the torch on to the sleeping bullock.

"What are we going to do with this poor brute?" I asked.

"Leave it where it is, I suppose. If the tigress comes—" My companion broke off short and with an exclamation of surprise bent down and gazed long and earnestly at the quiet form.

"Come on," I said irritably. "I'm for getting back to bed. "

Grainger straightened himself and looked me in the face.

"The tigress *has* come," he said, with a sharp intake of the breath.

"What the hell do you mean, man?"

"Don't stand there like a fool," he snapped. "Look for yourself."

I too bent over the bullock. The head, I now saw, was twisted round at an unnatural angle, and the eyes were glazed in death. The bullock's neck was broken.

For a moment I was stunned with surprise; then, recovering myself, I tried to puzzle out the truth. The tigress, I reckoned, must have been watching the clearing for some time before the moon was first obscured. Then, when the original shower started, she had killed so swiftly that not even a groan had escaped her victim.

As for the slight sound that would have been made by the bullock's fall, that would have escaped us owing to the steady patter of the water on the leaves of the trees. But why, I asked myself, had she not remained to devour the kill? The moon had shone for a second brief period soon after the slaying of the bullock —hence our belief that the animal was sleeping—yet of the tigress there had been no sign.

The answer was supplied by Grainger.

"It was your creaking the *machan* that frightened her away," he said icily. "I've you to thank for not bagging her tonight."

"In all probability," I replied, "it was your voice telling me to be quiet that did the trick."

He began to argue hotly, but I cut him short:

"Grainger, I'm not going to stand around here in the rain with that tigress somewhere near and wanting her supper. I'm off. Follow me if you like."

WITH my lighted torch in one hand and my gun in the other, I started down the path that ran to the site of my old camp and thence on to the river, where our ways would part. Grainger came after me, and we trudged along in silence and rain.

We'd made about half a mile when my companion's voice sounded urgently behind me.

"Stop," he said quickly. "I heard something."

I halted at once and the two of us stood motionless on the tiny path. On either side of us towered the dense black walls of the jungle, which pattered and hissed in the streaming downpour. The faint ray of my torch peered like a hopeless eye at the dark immensity surrounding us.

"What was it?" I didn't like my voice; it wasn't quite as steady as it might have been.

"Listen. I believe we're being followed."

Only the rain; I was sure it was only the rain. And yet . . . Yes, my ears did detect an undertone in the pattering gloom. A breathing, low and hoarse, could be faintly heard well within the jungle on our left.

In my right hand I held the torch; in my left the gun. I was almost defenseless, for I couldn't aim my gun and at the same time hold the torch. Yet we must have light; it might prove our salvation.

"Ready with that rifle of yours, Grainger?" I spoke the words as loudly as I could; since the tigress was almost upon us, there seemed no point in whispering.

"O. K," said Grainger. "And for heaven's sake keep your torch steady. Aim it straight at her. I'll do the shooting."

We shrank back as far as we could to the right hand side of the path, and I aimed the torch straight at a point in the opposite fringe of jungle where I judged the tigress to be. In the round, white circle of light the twigs and branches of trees stood out like a picture on a movie screen. The screen was barely ten feet from us, and if the tigress charged from out of it I had little hope. At such close quarters a revolver might have saved at least one of us, but like fools we'd only brought rifle and gun. We waited, waited while that breathing went on. Then the breathing stopped.

Had she gone, or was she still there? No indication, no sound, nothing.

"Fire, man," I said harshly. "To scare her."

"No good. You told me you did that last night. She'll get accustomed to it. And I'd rather keep both rounds, in case—"

I understood. More waiting. And still —nothing.

At last I could stand it no longer.

"Let's get on," I said hoarsely.

"No running, mind you."

"No."

"Get along, then."

Though every fiber in my being was urging me to break into a run, I began walking steadily down the path, with Grainger close at my heels. We'd almost reached my deserted camp when a furious coughing roar on our left caused me to whirl like a flash. In an instant my torch was off the path and pointed in the direction of the sound. I felt Grainger beside me stiffen. Tense and alert, we awaited the end of that charge, for charging us she must be.

But the jungle still held her. Instead of a flying death, all spitting face and outstretched claws, we beheld naught save that grim wall of trees and undergrowth. The roar had been a mere pretense; she was trying to wear us down by sheer bluff and intimidation; *now* I understood what big game hunters meant when they talked of a tiger demonstrating.

I gazed at that wall of trees, lighted by the ghostly ray of my torch. The twigs no longer stood out clearly; indeed, for the last quarter of an hour the strength of the light had been decreasing. And then with a sinking heart I remembered. I'd told my boy to insert a new battery that very afternoon, as I knew the old one was nearly spent. He'd forgotten my order, of course, and I the old maxim out East: "If you want anything done, do it yourself and don't leave it to your servants."

The light glimmered, went out altogether. Complete blackness enveloped us.

The minutes dragged by like hours. Nothing happened. No light, no movement, no sound even now, for the rain had ceased.

"Do something, man. Fire your rifle. Anything," I said gruffly.

Grainger's rifle roared into the air. The crashing echoes, shattering the night, were terrific. I felt we'd done something wrong in disturbing the stillness. The tigress and the jungle and the rain and the silence formed parts of a different world in which we were interlopers. We might have to pay for that.

The echoes died. I heard a very faint rustle which led me to believe that the tigress, scared by the shot, was retreating.

I plucked Grainger's arm, and we went on down the path once more. Clouds still obscured the heavens, and though we'd been hours in the darkness we couldn't see a yard ahead. There is a saying that one's eyes get accustomed to the dark, but in reality that saying is meaningless. No human being on earth can see when there is almost a complete absence of light. Yet the tigress could see well enough; somehow the idea of that left a nasty taste in the mouth.

Guided more by a sense of direction than anything else, we stumbled along the path, 'till we reached the open clearing of my deserted camp. Here a certain amount of light obtained, and I could make out the stockade I had built for Sunstar and the black. The stockade was strong and high, and in it I knew we could spend the rest of the night in comparative safety. But we were wet through and cold, and six more hours remained before daylight. If we remained here till dawn, a severe chill, followed by malaria and a consequent absence from the Christmas meeting was a certainty. I put the proposition to Grainger.

"I'm for our bungalows every time," said he and, crossing the clearing, we resumed our course for the river.

We both heaved sighs of relief when at last we reached the bank of the Mae Fah. We could actually see one another, which was a change; moreover, we didn't feel so hemmed in as we had done in that confounded jungle. Behind, in the jungle, death lurked; here, in the open, life and air pulsed into our lungs.

We were due to part now; he to cross the shallow river and follow up the opposite bank to his bungalow, I to go south to my own bungalow on this side of the stream. For a few seconds an uneasy silence reigned between us, then Grainger broke it.

"Want to come up to my bungalow, Foster?" I thought I detected a faint sneer in the words.

"No," I said steadily. "Want to come down to mine?"

"No."

"Well, so long." I turned to go. "So long."

We began our solitary walks back to our respective homes. I knew that each of us was dying for the other's company, though neither would have owned it, and I had all the time a feeling that something was following me up, keeping well within the scrub that clothed the river bank. Nerves, I told myself, and the fact that Grainger had left me; but, try as I might, I couldn't get rid of that sensation, and it was all I could do to restrain an urgent instinct to run.

The track along the bank was pretty rough, but I made fairly good going, as the sky was rapidly clearing and, though the moon was sinking, stars sheened on the water beneath me.

After about an hour and a half's tramping I saw the dim outline of my bungalow ahead, and never was a sight more welcome. A small, dry side stream of the Mae Fah, with a sandy bed, ran down one side of the compound that surrounded the bungalow, and directly I'd crossed the sand some instinct made me look over my shoulder.

There, on the farther rim of the side stream, and occupying exactly the spot I'd quitted a few seconds ago, was a shape, long and sinister.

I raised gun to shoulder and fired. The echoes flung and crashed though the night. I lowered the weapon and strained my eyes. Nothing more was to be seen of that shape.

After that I confess I ran, ran like hell through the gates of my compound and up into the bungalow, where I yelled for my servants. By Jove, but I was glad to feel the hard teak boards under my feet and to see the scared faces of my boy and cook who came hurrying toward me.

And then I had the four things I needed the most: a stiff whisky, a hot bath, a hastily prepared meal and a collapse into my comfortable bed. Now that I had walls around me, the tigress could go to the devil for all I cared. I didn't even dream of her in the deep sleep that shortly overtook me.

CHAPTER III

THE FOREST

I DID not wake till nine o'clock next morning. I was stiff in every limb from the effects of cold and fatigue, but a dose of quinine and a brisk rubdown soon put me right. I dressed quickly, after which the first thing I did was to hasten down and inspect the dry stream that ran along the side of my compound.

The shape I had seen last night had been no figment of the imagination; in the soft sand that rimmed the farther edge of the jungle the unmistakable prints of the tigress's paws were plainly marked. No traces of blood, however, were to be seen, and I was more determined than ever to obtain a rifle during my stay in Cha Kum. Shot and ball guns were not reliable enough for dealing with big game.

In the bright morning sunshine I no longer had the shivers. Though the tigress had followed me right up to the compound, I felt secure from her now. She'd seen me safely home, so to speak, then, conscious that she'd be free from disturbance, in all probability she had returned to the dead bullock and devoured her meal in peace. And in peace she'd have to remain till Grainger and I came back from Cha Kum at the beginning of January.

I had a hard day's work before me if I were to leave for Cha Kum on the morrow, and so, dismissing all further thoughts of the tigress from my mind, I reentered my bungalow and after breakfast buried myself in a hundred and one different tasks.

The day passed quickly. I had to give orders to my buffalo drivers, my elephant mahouts, my felling contractors and foremen, and attend to the innumerable tiny details that go to the smooth working of a teak forest one thousand square miles in extent. I didn't get a breather till evening, when I leaned over the veranda railings to take in the view.

It was a view I loved. My compound had been cleared on a hillock overlooking the river Mae Fah. The river ran clear and cool, with broad sandbars showing on either side of it. Dotted about the shallow water and stranded on the bars were the long shapes of dozens of teak logs awaiting the coming of the rains which would sweep them down the first stages of their hazardous journey to the sawmills of Bangkok, five hundred miles to the south.

Beyond the river the jungle rose in undulating slopes till it formed a purple ridge high up on the distant skyline. This part of the forest was Grainger's domain, though at the moment he was working teak well to the north of my bungalow and as yet the trees opposite me were free from the activities of his felling camps. On the right of my compound the little native village of Hwe Tark nestled along the river bank. It was composed of attap roofed shanties, fringed with coconut palms and banana plantations, and the inhabitants were streaming out of their homes for the evening bath in the Mae Fah. Laughing and splashing, brown men and brown maidens laved their glistening bodies in the gently running water. The scene, dusted with gold by the evening sun, was bright and gladsome.

In the compound itself my Lao coolies were busily watering the flower beds. I idly watched the coolies for awhile, then sauntered down into the compound and across to the stables, where my ponies were munching in deep contentment their nightly paddy ration. Both seemed quite recovered after the alarms of the previous night and, leaving them, I stood with my back to the river and gazed at the quiet landscape.

I was now facing, not Grainger's forest, but my own, which rose tier upon tier behind my bungalow till it merged into the sky. No wind stirred, and as the shadows lengthened I found myself once more marveling at the beauty that lies in silent trees. There is a strange and eery loveliness in the spectacle of thousands and thousands of trees quietly asleep. I can not describe that beauty, or the sensations that it brings to me; I know only

that in looking on those trees I feel as though I had journeyed to another world.

The sun sank and a warning chill came into the air. The laughing and the shouting of the villagers died. Night swept a giant hand over the valley, the valley that was mine and Grainger's. Soberly, and with a great peace in my heart, I climbed up the steps to my bungalow.

Once in the living room, which was lighted by an oil lamp placed on a large teak table in the center, my heart warmed as my own intimate possessions surrounded me. On the walls hung the antlered skulls of sambur and barking deer shot while out on my forest tours; a silver cup, won at school boxing, winked from a shelf; photographs of polo teams and odd groups of teak-wallas conjured up splendid memories, while, best of all, down one side of the room ran a large mahogany bookcase in which were my tried favorites. Though I was alone, I had hundreds of silent companions.

I was now too happy to read, so flung myself on a long rattan chair, lighted my pipe and called to the boy for my evening tot of whisky. Presently, on the strength of a coming holiday, I had another drink, and when that was finished I walked into my bedroom and gazed at a snapshot that was framed on the dressing table. The face of Mary Collins, the missionary doctor's daughter at Cha Kum, was smiling up at me.

I had taken the snap at the last Christmas meeting held in Cha Kum a year before, and in secret it meant a lot to me. Mary, big and golden, with a rare smile and capable hands. Was I a fool that I'd come to thinking of her so much? For that matter, was there one man in the whole of upcountry who didn't think the world of her? Even Ralph Grainger . . .

My boy tapped at the door, inquiring whether I would like dinner, as the time was past eight o'clock. Guiltily, I hastened back to the living room, and when the tray was brought in I sat down to the usual courses of tough, stringy chicken. The soup was chicken, the entrée chicken, the joint was chicken, yet for me that night the repast tasted fit for a prince. But a shaft of moonlight dreamed over the front veranda and that photograph stood in its frame next door. And, last but not least, the whisky was doing its mellow share.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTMAS MEETING

I WAS early in the saddle next morning, riding Sunstar along a bridle path that wound up and up behind my bungalow till it eventually reached the high ridge overlooking the valley. Following me were my syce with the black, my servants, and ten strong coolies carrying all the kit I needed for the coming Christmas meeting.

A twelve mile climb brought us to the ridge, along which a rough cart road ran in the direction of Cha Kum, still another ten miles distant to the north. Here traces of civilization were apparent. Bullock carts, laden with produce, squeaked and groaned on their way to market; pack bullocks, with panniers slung across them, munched at the grass on either side, oblivious to the shouts of their Lao drivers; tiny Siamese ponies, mounted by turbaned Shans, slithered through the dust in the peculiar native shuffle that is midway between a trot and a canter. In contrast with the silence of my valley, the cart road, though deserted in parts for miles on end, seemed teeming with life and sound.

Grainger would be somewhere ahead of me, as his forest bungalow was north of mine and consequently nearer Cha Kum, but I took the remaining ten miles leisurely, for the sun was hot and the pace of my coolies slow. I had tiffin under the shade of a huge cotton tree, then rested an hour in the worst heat of the day, and it was not until four o'clock in the afternoon that I reached the outskirts of the paddy fields surrounding the large native town of Cha Kum.

I rode straight across the fields, for the harvest had already been gathered and

the going was good for Sunstar's hoofs. Pronged Buddhist temples, with compound walls on which red mouthed dragons leered fantastically, passed me on right and left as I entered the town, and soon I was in the center of the busy marketplace.

Men, women and children, of all shades from the lightest yellow to the darkest brown, swarmed thick as bees in the narrow thoroughfare; dainty Lao girls, with hair as black as coal and eyes that were dark pools of laughter, flashed smiles at me and Sunstar; tiny naked children, solemn of countenance and puffing at enormous cheroots, nudged one another in awe at the approach of the white stranger; bronzed forms, sun kissed, beautiful as Greek statues, salaamed and inquired courteously after my health; the chattering of countless tongues filled the hot scent of the dust laden air.

The native quarter faded astern and the neat gardens of the little white colony came into view. A journey I loved was over, but the thrill of meeting my own people set my pulses throbbing as I leaped off Sunstar opposite the bungalow reserved for my use while in Cha Kum.

It was dusk by the time I walked down to the club. On the way there Grainger came out from the bungalow where he was staying, and we entered the club grounds together. About thirty teak-wallas had already assembled outside the main building, and soon we were seated in their midst. They, like ourselves, had ridden in from their widely scattered forests in order to enjoy a brief holiday in comparative civilization; every one of them was known to us, and what with the open air life and the tan of the sun on their faces they were as goodly a body of men as one could see anywhere East of Suez.

Opposite me sat old Trevor, firm and massive. A Forest Officer in the service of the Siamese Government, he was now too old for an active jungle life and spent most of his time in a comfortable office in Cha Kum. Next to him lounged Tommy Malone.

"Hello, Tommy," I said, "when did you arrive?"

"Yesterday," he replied.

"A mile or so behind your pony, I suppose."

"No. Beat him for a change. He shied at the compound gates and I got in first. Over his head."

There was a general laugh at this, for Tommy took the prize for being the world's worst rider. It was quite a common occurrence for his pony to arrive at a destination long before he did but, whereas the sight of a riderless horse would usually send every one scurrying out in frantic search, with him it didn't matter. One knew for certain that in an hour or so he'd fetch up, covered with mud and wearing a broad grin under his bashed topee, with the strange news that he'd slipped off the saddle.

Malone was the sort of man whom nothing could hurt. While staying in my forest bungalow the previous March, for instance, he'd (a) burned most of his hair off through inspecting a dead beetle over a naked light, (b) fallen backward over my veranda railings and dropped ten feet to the ground below, and (c) swallowed the cigar he was smoking in the process; at least we couldn't find it afterwards. But none of these slight incidents had worried him at all.

When the laughter had subsided Trevor cleared his throat.

"By the way, Foster, the polo committee have fixed on you to captain the Seniors this year."

"Me?" I exclaimed, aghast. "But I've only just qualified to be a Senior."

"I know, but they seem to want you all the same."

This was a signal honor for me, since the Juniors vs. Seniors match formed the *pièce de résistance* of the meeting. So far I had always played for the Juniors, and for the last few matches had captained them as well; now that I'd completed ten years out East I knew, of course, that I'd be transferred to the other team, but I'd hardly expected to be chosen as their captain so soon. Sunstar, I rather

suspected, had influenced the committee in my favor. I mumbled something about being honored, then Grainger leaned over to Trevor—

"Who's captaining the Juniors, Uncle?" he asked.

"You, Grainger."

Grainger swung round to me.

"On opposite sides—at last, and captains into the bargain! We'll see now who's the faster, Sunstar or the mare."

"We probably will," I said evenly.

"Come on. A hundred ticals on the result of the match."

All eyes were on me. Sunstar and the mare were easily the two best polo ponies upcountry, and the outcome of the struggle would largely depend on how they and their riders played; every man present was fully aware of this and awaiting my answer with eagerness.

"I'll take you," I said suddenly.

"Done, then?"

"Done!" I echoed.

A BUZZ of conversation started, which stilled as Grainger switched on to the subject of the first bet between us. He'd reached the point where we'd heard the tigress demonstrating, when Mary Collins and her father arrived and we rose to our feet. They shook hands all round, then took their places in the circle.

The moon shone like a huge yellow lantern in a sky rich with clusters of gems, and Mary Collins herself shone like a golden flower in the midst of those big, bronzed men. We were five hundred miles distant from any real civilization, with wild jungle in between, yet her deep voice took us farther than that; it took us back home.

When the assembly broke up, I saw Grainger cross swiftly over to her before she left for the hospital with her father.

"What about a ride tomorrow morning before breakfast, Mary?" I heard him say.

"I'd love to, Ralph, but my pony's lame and I'm resting him."

"You can have one of mine. The gray mare if you like."

"The gray mare? But only you can ride her."

"She'll be all right with me alongside on the dun. Not afraid, are you?"

"Afraid?" Her cool blue eyes sought his. "How does that come in? I'll ride your mare or nothing."

"I'll be outside the hospital at seven, then."

"Right. I'll be ready. Ah—there's John. I want to speak to him."

She ran over to me. Tall though she was, her head came scarcely up to my shoulder as she stood beside me.

"Mary," I whispered, "you're lovelier than the moonlight. And that's at its very best tonight."

"And how long did it take you to think up that?" she asked, laughing.

"I didn't think of it at all," I replied. "I read it somewhere, I believe."

"Oh, John, it's just like you to go and spoil everything a second afterward."

"And how have I done that?" I demanded.

"You wouldn't understand. Now tell me; how's Sunstar?"

"He's fine. But do I come after him? I might have been frightfully ill for all you knew."

"You might have been, but I don't think you have. I think, John, that you take very good care of yourself in that forest of yours."

"I do and I don't," said I.

"Then your cook does." She smiled.

"My cook!" I cried.

"Yes," she said slyly, "to judge from results."

"Now that," I said, "was rude. I'll forgive you, though, if you'll come out riding with me day after tomorrow morning."

"And can I ride Sunstar himself?"

"You can."

"Then I'm forgiven."

Her father's voice called from over the grass, and with a quick good night she hurried away. Grainger and I walked

back to our respective bungalows together.

We spoke not a word till we reached the gates of his compound.

"Come on in and have dinner with me tonight," he said, as we paused on the dusty lane.

"No thanks, I'd rather be alone this evening," I replied.

"Sorry when this meeting comes to an end, Foster?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes, I suppose I shall be."

"You'll miss the polo and—er—other games, I take it?"

"Naturally."

"You'll miss—nothing else?" His white, even teeth flashed in the moon, and in a sudden gust of anger I seized his arm.

"What the devil's that to do with you?" I cried.

"Want me out of running for the polo match next week?" he said quietly.

"No. Of course I don't."

"Then let go my arm."

I dropped my hand.

"Polo?" I said blankly.

"Were you deliberately *trying* to hurt me then?" he asked in a curious voice.

I raised my eyebrows. Had the moon got into his head?

"No," he added. "I can see you weren't. But keep those great hands off me in future. You don't know your own strength, man. Well, so long."

"So long."

I was turning on my heel when a thought struck me.

"Going out riding with Mary Collins tomorrow, aren't you?"

He nodded.

"Shouldn't try to make her ride the gray mare if I were you."

"And what the devil's that to do with *you*, Foster?" he barked.

For answer I left him and, striding into my bungalow, shouted to the boy for dinner in a voice that made the dishes rattle. In less than twelve hours' time Grainger and Mary would be riding side by side in the rare brightness of a cold weather morning.

CHAPTER V

SUNSTAR

SEVEN o'clock chimed; I yawned and sat up in bed. Along with the early morning light came realization that at this moment Grainger was awaiting Mary Collins outside the hospital gates. Nothing to do with me, of course, but the very idea drove all thought of further sleep from my mind. I dressed quickly, and by half past seven was down at the club with Sunstar and the black, putting in some badly needed practise with the stick and ball.

Several other teak-wallas, intent upon getting themselves and their ponies into form for the coming polo, were also in the grounds, and we had some nice runs up and down the field. I was none too happy about my black; he had never shown much aptitude for the game, and he now showed less promise than ever. Sunstar, on the other hand, was his same old self: keen and alert to anticipate my every wish, and I had some splendid gallops on him. Round about eight o'clock, as I was making a few final hits before riding back for breakfast, I was startled by shouts from some of the other players and, reining in Sunstar, I looked to where they were pointing.

Along one side of the club grounds a vast expanse of bare paddy fields stretched between the jungle and the town. Through the fields an old cart road ran, and down this road Grainger's gray mare, with Mary astride, was galloping furiously. A good hundred yards behind, and hopelessly outpaced, Grainger lashed at his dun in a futile endeavor to overtake the runaway.

The situation was desperate, for at that breakneck speed the gray mare would shortly be right in the native marketplace, and I dare not think what would happen then. There existed, however, a small path that ran out from the club grounds and joined the cart road at right angles; if I could gain the point where the path met the road before the gray mare had reached it, a

tragedy might be averted. I flung my polo stick away and dug my heels into Sunstar's flanks.

Three other jungle-wallas were already making for the gate where the path began, but Sunstar went by them like the wind. The little gate he took in his stride, the path ribboned beneath his pounding hoofs, the glare of the cart road rushed to meet us, and we burst out upon it a bare twenty paces in front of the mare.

With a wrench that nearly had Sunstar off his legs I swerved him down the road at full gallop toward the town. It was a risky thing to do, and any other pony carrying a weight like mine would have come a nasty cropper, but if I'd pulled him to a standstill the mare would have cut across in front of me without giving me a chance to grab at her reins. The only course left me, therefore, was to gallop ahead of her and let her draw up gradually on me.

We thundered through the dust, while the shanties of the town drew ominously nearer. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw that the pace of the two ponies was about equal, so I checked Sunstar ever so slightly. Immediately the mare began to gain, and by the time her lean, vicious head was on a level with my knee I slackened my grip on Sunstar's reigns.

Now I had my chance. At the moment the speed of the ponies was uniform, which was what I wanted and, leaning far out of the saddle, with my right hand I seized the gray mare's reins. With my left I then pulled in Sunstar with all my might. The mare fought like a demon, but in spite of the terrific pace we were making my strength and weight told, and we finally drew up at a standstill opposite the first house in the marketplace.

Dismounting, I swept Mary off the back of the mare, and a second later Grainger, flashing up from behind on his dun, had seized the plunging mare and was soothing her.

"Thanks, John," said Mary quietly, but her face was very white and her hands were trembling.

I picked her up and placed her on Sunstar. Tall and well made though she was, she might have been a feather in my arms, and I derived a strange thrill of pleasure from the fact.

We were now in a ring of teak-wallas who by this time had caught us up, and from their looks I could see they were none too pleased with Grainger. A few curious natives, too, had assembled, and I thought it high time a curtain fell on the scene.

"Clear off, every one," I shouted. "Mary's coming back home with me."

The mob dispersed, leaving only Grainger standing between his two ponies.

"Coming with us, Ralph?" said Mary. Not the slightest hint of irony lurked in her voice; the question was asked in a straightforward, friendly manner, and deserved a friendly answer. Grainger, however, replied with a brusk shake of the head and, vaulting on the gray, cantered off toward his bungalow with the dun in tow.

I grasped Sunstar's bridle and began leading him quietly in the direction of the hospital.

"And now," said I, when Mary and I were alone, "what made you ride the mare?"

"John—" she leaned forward in Sunstar's saddle—"*must* there be post-mortems?"

"There was almost need for a real one," I said tactlessly, but at the moment I felt angry with both of them for taking unnecessary risks.

"If it hadn't been for you—"

"That?" I broke in. "That was nothing. I can ride a bit, that's all."

"And lucky for me that you can. But the rest. Forget about it. I have. Doesn't everyone do silly things at times? Haven't even you wanted to do something silly when you're out in the cold morning air?"

"Confound the cold morning air," I growled.

"Dear old John," said she. "You'll feel better after breakfast."

I became very angry indeed.

"Look here," I almost shouted, "everyone from Grainger to yourself seems to think I'm a harmless lump. They say it in different ways, that's all, and I'm sick and tired of it, I tell you."

"They don't think anything of the sort. Why, only yesterday—"

"They do," I interrupted rudely. "Now see here. I've a bet with friend Grainger as to who wins the coming polo match, Seniors vs. Juniors. Well, *I'm* going to win it, and I'm going to knock hell out of Grainger and that gray devil in the process. You'll be watching and you'll see if I don't."

"It's eight o'clock," said Mary. "I'm hungry, aren't you?"

We were now at the hospital gates, and she slipped to the ground. Her firm hand went into mine and her blue eyes twinkled in a smile.

"Oh, Mary," I cried.

"That's better. And once again—just all the thanks that a girl can give."

"You're riding with me on Sunstar tomorrow morning. Don't forget."

"I've ridden on him today, haven't I?"

"Yes, but that wasn't a real ride. You wait till Sunstar's going all out."

She hesitated.

"Mind if I put it off till next week? Say till after the polo match?"

"If you'd rather, but why?"

"I—I think I've had enough fast riding just for the present, and I did so want to enjoy a real gallop on Sunstar."

"Of course," I said. "I'd forgotten. Takes a few days to settle down again, so to speak."

"Thanks, John, I knew you'd understand."

"Goodby."

"Goodby."

CHAPTER VI

THE POLO MATCH

SIX DAYS later the whole of the white colony were seated in the club grounds, awaiting the mounting gong for the first chukker of the great annual match, Seniors vs. Juniors.

Though the normal game of polo is played in a series of seven chukkers, each of eight minutes' duration, it was usual for us to make the match one of four chukkers only; few of us had more than two ponies available, and to have played the full number of chukkers would have badly overstrained them.

For the second and fourth—the last the most important chukker of all—I would be riding Sunstar, and for the other two my black. Grainger, whose position as No. 1 for the Juniors entailed marking me, the back for the Seniors, would be riding the gray mare opposite Sunstar, while for the remaining chukkers he'd be on the dun.

The syces led out the ponies, I mounted the black, and the teams, with the Juniors in red sashes and ourselves in white, took up positions on the field. The umpire, old Trevor, threw in, and the game was off. The pounding of hoofs and the click of stick on ball quickly drove all other thoughts from my mind.

During that first chukker I couldn't get going; the black was duller than ever and his turning exasperatingly slow. I became a little rattled, I suppose, for I made several shocking miss-hits, though Grainger comforted me somewhat by making a clean getaway and then missing the goal mouth by yards. Not one of the players, in fact, showed anything like his best form, and after an uneventful eight minutes the chukker ended in two goals a side. Three at least of these goals had been scored by flukes, and none of them by either of the opposing captains; so far, I felt, both Grainger and I had been passengers.

When I rode out Sunstar my confidence was restored. He simply loved the game, and his sleek bay sides were quivering with excitement. The others, too, were all mounted on their best ponies, and now that some of the initial nerves had worn off the second chukker started as if we'd suddenly remembered we were playing the fastest game in the world.

Almost at the beginning of the chukker my No. 2 shot like a catapult out of a scrimmage and, pounding up the field, brought off a beautiful shot right through the center of the Junior's goal. Grainger retaliated two minutes later by scoring for his side, but after that we pressed them hard. We soon had a regular mêlée in front of the Juniors' posts, but their No. 3, a cool hand in a crisis, managed to tap the ball away to the right and Grainger was on it like a flash. Down came his stick on the ball and a second later he was galloping down the field toward our deserted goal.

As back I was naturally on the lookout for anything like that to happen, but swift as I was in wheeling Sunstar the gray mare had gained a good start on me. My pony was in his stride and after her and I knew that the short but most thrilling duel on earth lay ahead of me: that of chasing up a man and riding him off the ball before he can make the final shot through the goal.

I made lightning calculations as I flew after the mare. The rest of the field was yards behind both of us, and in consequence it was Grainger for that goal and me to save it. I weighed over two stone more than he did, and in a straight race I could never have come near him, but as things were Grainger was handicapped by having to think of hitting the ball while I had only to concentrate on getting the utmost speed out of Sunstar.

Grainger made his second hit. The ball ran slightly off the line to the goal, a fact which enabled me to draw up a little on him. But, though Sunstar was straining every fiber of his gallant little body, the third hit was made with me still a good length behind the mare. The ball, scudding over the turf, seemed to be coming to rest in a position where one more tap would send it through the goal. Could I ride off Grainger before he made that tap?

My pony was gaining now, though ever so slightly. Inch by inch the streaming space between us lessened, and at last I had drawn up on his near side. Our knees were together now, whereupon, with Sunstar understanding and helping me, I threw my whole weight against Grainger. The squeaking of stirrup leathers, the chafing of riding boots, the hoarse, panting breaths of us two men, the thunder of hoofs and the foam and the sweat of the galloping ponies made a little world of our own, a world of desperate, striving horsemanship.

My extra weight won through; though it had handicapped me in overtaking Grainger, now that I had done so it proved the winning factor. The gray mare was borne right over the ball and I just managed to get in a backhander on the near side which cleared the mouth of the goal. Next second the gong sounded and the second chukker was over, with scores still even at three goals apiece. By the skin of my teeth I'd saved a fourth being scored against us.

In the interval that followed I saw Grainger beckon to his No. 2 and lead him behind the clubhouse. Dick Mannering had only done a couple of years out East, but he was a nice lad, keen on his work so I had heard, and as straight as a die. There was one thing about him, however, that most of us had noticed at one time or another; he lacked that extra bit of nerve that brings a man to the front. I won't say he was apt to funk in emergencies—funk is a nasty word—but today he'd certainly been the only player out of the eight who so far hadn't really let himself go. When you play polo you haven't merely to dress up in riding kit and look pretty; you've got to go absolutely all out when the occasion demands, and there was no doubt that Mannering hadn't done justice either to himself or to his ponies in either of the first two chukkers.

Mannering, of course, had been taken behind the clubhouse in order to receive a first class dressing down, and although he'd deserved one to a certain extent, I felt sorry for the youngster, as Grainger wasn't apt to mince his words. They

were soon back, and I saw that Mannering looked drawn and pale for all his sunburn, while his captain's face had darkened in anger. Then the gong sounded and we rode out again.

The third chukker resembled the first, except that my black chose to behave even worse than he had done before. Not only did he show no interest in the game whatever, but he started to "pull", and as he had a mouth like iron it was all I could do to keep him on the field. On the other hand Grainger's dun was shaping better, and what with Mannering showing a good deal more dash the Juniors had by far the best of the chukker, which finished at two goals to one in their advantage.

As we sat down for the last interval the match had reached a thrilling stage. The Juniors now led by five goals to four, with one more chukker to come. To beat them, therefore, we had to obtain a lead of two clear goals in the next eight minutes of play: a stiff proposition for my team, I reflected, but I knew enough of them to be sure that every man would give his level best right up to the last second of the game.

In the final chukker every man was at the top of his form, while the ponies, as if conscious that an extra effort was needed from them, did their parts to perfection. All of us, however, were overshadowed by Grainger on his gray mare, and I'll never forget the sight of those two on that sunny December afternoon.

The very brilliance of Grainger's play, however, handicapped the Juniors; they appeared overwhelmed by their captain's performance and in consequence their teamwork suffered badly, though we on the other hand kept our heads and worked in perfect unison.

When the chukker was some three minutes old my No. 1 hit the ball out of a mêlée right down one side of the field, and my No. 2, following up, got in a beautiful near side stroke that sent the ball scudding through the posts, thus equalizing the scores. After that the pace waxed faster than ever, and once Grainger was penalized by the umpire for crossing. Of course, he didn't mean to foul, but by now the man was wild with excitement and playing not only recklessly but dangerously. Indeed, the thought occurred to me that we'd be lucky if we finished the match without a nasty accident.

The game drew near its end, and I was just wondering whether we might have to play to extra time, when the ball flashed out of a ruck and I saw my chance. It came past me at a beautiful angle and I fairly flung Sunstar toward it. Grainger's No. 2, young Dick Mannering, might have hustled me off, but he hesitated, hesitated for just that fatal fraction of a second that brings success or failure, and I pounced upon the ball. A whirl of my stick, the clean crack of a snorter right up the field, and Sunstar was flying away to the Juniors' deserted goal.

I took a swift glance round, to see that I was clear of every one save Grainger. He'd been carried well over to the left of the ground by a previous rush, and was if anything slightly ahead of me at the moment. He couldn't, however, cut across my path and intercept me, for that is not allowed in polo; instead, he'd have to ride me off the ball by drawing in behind me and then overtaking me in the same manner as I had done him in the second chukker. That goal, therefore, was as good as mine; the ball was bang in front of the Juniors' posts in a position where one more tap would send it through, while the chances of my being overtaken were out of the question; I'd yet to see the pony that could give Sunstar a flying start of several yards.

My eyes were now glued on the ball, but when Sunstar had made no more than a dozen strides I caught the flare of a red sash approaching me at right angles from the left. It was sheer crossing on the part of Grainger, and against all the rules of polo, but mine was the right of way, so to speak, and I held grimly on in the wake of the distant ball.

A thunderbolt hit Sunstar. I was conscious of the earth rushing up to meet me, of sprawling, kicking ponies, of somebody shouting, of a breathless moment of suspense, and then a blow on the head sent whirls of flame behind my eyes and I knew no more.

CHAPTER VII

VISITORS

THE FIRST thing I remember clearly was seeing the little missionary doctor bending over me.

"That's right," said he.

The polo match swept into memory and with it Grainger's foul.

"How's Sunstar?" I whispered.

"O. K. And so are the others. But don't you worry about them. You're just to lie still and get well. You're not even to *think*, understand? Just slack away there in bed and we'll have you right in no time."

It wasn't so easy to obey those instructions; my head throbbed with a splitting headache and I felt as if my whole body had been dragged through a mangle; but I had absolute faith in Dr. Collins, and after I'd been in hospital three days I was well enough to hear his verdict. Briefly, I'd received a kick on the head that, had it not been for the thickness of my skull, would have given me severe concussion, while my body was a mass of bruises. By a miracle, however, no bones were broken, and it was merely a question now of my lying quietly in hospital for two or three weeks, by the end of which time I'd be fit for forest work again.

On the sixth day after the accident I was allowed to receive visitors. The first to arrive was Dick Mannering.

"Hello, Foster," he said shyly. "Thought I'd blow in to see how you were getting on."

"I'm fine," I answered, though I wasn't so sure about my visitor; he looked pale and there were dark lines under his eyes; the Christmas meeting didn't seem to be doing *him* much good, I reflected.

"Having a good time?" I asked him.

"A-1, thanks," but his answer lacked conviction.

"You look a bit worried, Mannering. Ponies O. K. and all that sort of thing?"

"Ponies? Oh, they're all right."

"Splendid."

"What made you ask about them?" he asked suddenly.

"Damned if I know."

He threw a swift glance at me and colored.

"Yes," he said after a pause, "you've spotted it. There *is* something on my mind. But—hardly the time to talk about that now, is it?"

"Nonsense," I answered. "There's nothing like hearing about some one else's troubles when you want to take your thoughts off your own. So fire away."

"It's this," he began slowly. "Don't know whether you noticed it, but after the second chukker of that match Grainger took me behind the clubhouse. You saw us, did you? Well, he gave me a pretty useful talking to for not playing hard enough, but I can tell you it was nothing to what he said to me on the day after the match."

"The day after?" I echoed in surprise.

"Yes. He went at me for not hustling you off the ball in the last chukker. And for what I did—or didn't do—in the match as a whole he called me a damned coward."

"Did he?" I exclaimed hotly; no one, not even Grainger, had a right to say that to a mere boy.

"No," my companion shook his head, "no use going for *him*, Foster. He's right. I am—a bit of a coward."

He finished the sentence white and shivering. Altogether, he was in a pretty bad way, and I felt most confoundedly sorry for him. But it wouldn't do to sympathize too much with his troubles, and after racking my brain for some other line of reasoning I had the inspiration.

"What's the time?" I said suddenly.

"The time?" he echoed in surprise.

"About half past eleven, I believe."

"That leaves an hour and a half before tiffin. Doing anything particular before then?"

"I was going to have written some letters in my bungalow after I'd left you."

"Well, don't. Take out your pony for a ride instead. Don't put a curb on him, only a snaffle, and when you're the other side of the paddy fields ride him along the worst jungle path you can find. Take risks, lots of 'em. Put him at a full gallop round corners, and all that sort of thing. And if you fall off so much the better. You won't get hurt. What about Tommy Malone? He's fallen off hundreds of times."

"Ah," he said slowly, "I'm beginning to see the idea."

"Now stop that," I said sharply. "You're beginning that damned thinking again. Thinking about whether you can do it or not, and so on. Get off right now and do as I said. And while you're on the way to the stables count the number of steps it takes you to get there. Or *do* something at any rate that'll keep that brain of yours quiet."

He took the floor in a couple of strides, but at the door he turned and smiled whimsically.

"Funny that I should have been talking about *my* troubles when you're laid out yourself, Foster. Wrong way round, hasn't it been? Awfully decent of you, though."

"Out you get," I cried, and the door closed behind him.

Half an hour after he had gone the door opened again, and this time it was Ralph Grainger who came in. He shot one quick, penetrating glance in my direction, then without a word stalked over to the window, where he stood for a while with his fingers nervously drumming on the sill.

"Lovely weather, Grainger," I remarked eventually.

At the sound of my voice he swung round and faced me.

"Do you think I did that—crossed you—for the money?" he demanded passionately.

"The *money?*"

"Yes—that hundred ticals we'd laid on the match."

"Well, hardly."

"Hardly? Is that all you've got to say?"

"You know as well as I do such a thought's never even entered my head."

"Then why *did* I cross you?"

"You were a bit carried away toward the end of the match, I suppose. That goal had to be saved somehow, and you acted without thinking."

"You saying that to try and please me?"

I laughed.

"Why should I try to please you? I've told you what I imagine to be the truth."

He appeared relieved at my answer and switched the conversation on to Sunstar.

"Your Sunstar's all right. Bit shaken for a day or two after the accident, and he went off his feed as well. But—"

"They never told me that," I said quickly. "I understood he hadn't been hurt at all."

"They didn't want you worried, did they? And in any case he's as fit as a fiddle now."

"Are you sure?" I asked anxiously. "Have you seen him lately?"

"Saw him only this morning. Been around his stable a good bit, matter of fact. Can't trust these damned syces. Takes a white man to look after a pony properly."

Grainger spoke offhandedly, but I knew enough of him to realize that in all probability he'd been attending to Sunstar night and day since the accident. And yet—and herein lay the extraordinary part of the man's nature—so far he hadn't made the slightest apology for flattening me out in hospital. Not only had he ruined the polo match, but he'd come near to killing me into the bargain, and in spite of all this here was he at my bedside behaving as though

I'd done *him* some injury. A strange situation, to put it mildly, and brought about by Grainger's utter incapability of saying those two simple words: "I'm sorry."

That he was sorry, desperately sorry, I felt sure; but his fierce pride would never allow him to confess to the slightest fault; he'd die rather than apologize, and conflicting emotions rose up in me as his tall figure towered by my bedside. Grainger the tiger, alert, terrible, capable of utter selfishness and cruelty: Grainger the man, the man who'd helped me in a dozen different ways in the past. Twice he'd nursed me through a bad attack of fever in the forest, and on one occasion he'd rescued me in the nick of time from the clutches of a swollen jungle stream. What, therefore, were my feelings toward him? Did I hate Ralph Grainger, or did I like him?

"Hell," I exclaimed suddenly, for the problem was beyond me.

I saw his look of surprise, and covered up quickly.

"Those syces I was thinking of," I lied. "A slack lot of devils. Thanks, Grainger."

"That? That was nothing. When'll you be fit to return to forest work again, by the way?"

"Doctor says in two or three weeks."

"That means I'll be back in the valley a good fortnight before you will. Meeting here ends a week today."

"Well?" I prompted, wondering what he was driving at.

"There's the bet, fellow. The polo's a washout, but I take it the one on the tigress still stands."

"It does," I replied. "And you've a better chance of winning it than I have. You've a fortnight's start on me."

"So you think I'll take advantage of you in that way, do you? Well, you're wrong; I won't fire a shot at her till you've come out again."

"Rot, man. By now the tigress may be attacking some of the villagers' cattle for all we know. It's up to you to have a go at her directly you return."

"I'll do," said he, "precisely what I think fit. All I wanted to know was whether the bet was still on under the circumstances."

"Yes, it is. I've told you that once, and I tell it to you again."

"Good. Well, I'll be getting along back to my bungalow for tiffin."

"One minute, Grainger. Dick Mannering's been in to see me this morning."

"Has he, indeed! And what did he have to say for himself?"

"Not very much, but quite enough. If you want to call a man a coward, Grainger, why can't you do it to some one of your own age and size?"

"But he *is* a coward, isn't he?"

"Whether he's one or not, the fact remains that it's not going to help a fellow by telling him he's one. For that matter most of us are cowards in one way or another. You, for instance."

"Me?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. You heard me, didn't you?"

He leaned over my bed and his eyes were blazing. I'd meant to sting him for that remark to young Mannering, and I'd succeeded admirably.

"You're a sick man now," he snapped. "But when you're on your feet again you'll take back that remark or—"

"Or what?" I prompted.

"Think I'm afraid of you, big as you are?"

"Good heavens, no."

"Then why have you called me a coward?"

"Because you're desperately afraid of yourself."

He could make no answer to that, and a moment later Mary Collins entered with my tiffin on a tray.

"Ralph, I think it's time you left," she said, quick to sense tension in the air.

Normally he would have obeyed her, but now he was pale with anger.

"Haven't been here so very long, have I?" he asked, a challenge in his voice.

"No, but quite long enough," she answered calmly. "John's supposed to have rest and quiet. He doesn't seem to have had it with you."

Without another word he strode to the door, but as he turned the handle she called after him.

"Ralph—"

"Yes, what is it?" sullenly.

"I'm sorry."

"What for?"

"For you."

"When I want any one's sympathy I'll ask for it."

"That's your trouble. You never will ask for any one's sympathy."

His dark eyes looked searchingly at hers as he tried to fathom her meaning, and I saw a flush spill over the whiteness of her throat. I turned my face to the wall.

"JOHN," a hand pressed on my shoulder. "Not asleep are you?"

"Eh? No."

"Your tiffin. And if you don't eat it quickly it'll be cold. Comes of driving people out of your room."

"Don't feel extra hungry today."

"You will when you see this."

The cover was lifted, disclosing a brace of snipe nestling on twin pieces of toast—my favorite dish.

"Mary, you're a wonder," I remarked.

"I only cooked them. Some one else brought them in for you."

"Who?"

"I'm not to tell. Now no more talk. Get on with your meal."

It takes more than a spasm of jealousy to put me off my feed, and I couldn't resist those snipe. I ate them bones and all—as one can when the birds are young and tender—then drowsed away in the heat of the afternoon.

At four o'clock Mary brought my tea.

"Another visitor to see you," she said. "But you've had enough excitement for today. I'll tell him to come round again tomorrow."

"Who is it, anyway?"

"Tommy Malone."

"Tommy? He'll do me a world of good," said I, so he and I had tea together.

"Well—" Tommy stuffed a large piece of cake into his mouth— "thought I'd moon around in the jungle this morning on the off chance of bagging a few green pigeon. But did I bag any? Not one. Let off about a hundred cartridges, then started back down a narrow path that leads to the paddy fields. Nearly there, when a sort of whirlwind came thundering up behind me round a blind corner. Man on a pony, it was, and the fellow must have been crazy. Never sounded his horn, and I just had time to jump for it. Landed on my back in a thorn bush at one side of the path while he went by like a flash of lightning. Disgraceful, I call it."

"That was Dick Mannering, Tommy?"

"Believe it was, but how did you know?"

"He was taking a cure."

"Eh?"

"Never you mind."

"All right," he grumbled. "But I wish he'd thought of my back. It's as full of thorns as a pig's is of bristles."

"Seen the doctor?"

"No need. Thorns'll work themselves out. Back's used to that sort of thing by now."

"By the way, Tommy," I said, when the tea was cleared away, "haven't shot any snipe lately, have you?"

"Couldn't hit one of those little birds with a machine gun. Why do you ask?"

"Some one sent in a brace for my tiffin today."

"Wasn't me, though I did see Grainger going downriver yesterday evening with his gun. Wondered at the time why he wasn't going as usual to the club."

"Ah, so it was Grainger, then."

"Queer fellow, Grainger. Rather have him as a friend than an enemy. And he's so confounded *good* at everything. The opposite of me, in fact."

We yarned away till dark had fallen, whereupon Tommy left for the club. At seven o'clock Mary paid me a final visit.

"I'm off to the club," she said. "Anything I can do before I go?"

"I'm as comfortable as can be," I told her. "And Tommy's done me a heap of good."

"Did you hear what happened when you and Sunstar were thrown?" she asked at a tangent. "Tommy was across that field like a flash and getting you free of the kicking ponies before the players had even time to dismount."

"I never knew that," I said. "Thanks, Mary; I'll remember."

She moved about the room, tidying up with the swift, deft touches peculiar to one of her sex, and I idly watched her. Her mother, who had died soon after she was born, had been a very beautiful woman, and Mary had taken after her, though in one respect, I mused, she resembled her father; she had his calm, unflinching courage. Doctor Collins' headquarters consisted of the tiny hospital in which I now lay, but at least a third of the year was spent by him in touring the scattered jungle villages in the neighborhood. Sometimes Mary would accompany him on these tours for the purpose of tending the sick brown children, and I knew enough of the jungle to appreciate fully the hardships she must willingly go through. If ever a man had occasion to be proud of his daughter, that man, I told myself, was Doctor Collins.

She turned suddenly from a vase of flowers, and our eyes met. I averted my head guiltily, for I felt that she'd read my thoughts. She walked to the head of my bed and fluffed the pillows:

"Good night, John. Sleep well."

"That ride on Sunstar. Haven't forgotten it, have you?"

"Did you think I had?" She smiled.

"No. But it'll have to be postponed till next year now, I'm afraid. I'll have to be getting back to the valley as soon as I'm well."

"One never knows. I might come out to the valley one day, and I'd ride him then."

I dreamed into the lurking shadows long after she had gone.

CHAPTER VIII

TIGER VALLEY

THREE weeks later I was riding slowly into the compound of my forest bungalow. My body was still very stiff and sore, and my head inclined to ache, but otherwise the long ride from Cha Kum had affected me much less than I'd expected.

The first news I received of the tigress came from the old headman of the village of Hwe Tark close by my bungalow. He had been anxiously awaiting my return, and he now informed me that during my absence the tigress had killed several head of cattle belonging to his men. In each case the killing had been done in the evening while the cattle were being driven back to the village after grazing all day in the outskirts of the jungle.

Had, I asked the headman, the matter been reported to the other white lord, who had returned to the valley a fortnight ago? Yes, answered the old Lao, but the white lord had said he was busy on his own affairs and could offer no help for several days at least. Would I, therefore, be gracious enough to take out my gun and slay the she-devil that was putting terror into the hearts of the humble villagers?

I reassured the old man, and he departed, pouring down blessings upon my head. What the deuce had come over Grainger? I asked myself fiercely. For the sake of giving me even chances on a bet, he'd allowed these helpless wretches to lose valuable property without lifting a finger in their aid. Still, Grainger was Grainger, and I contented myself with sending him a short note by coolie stating that I was back at Hwe Tark and setting about an immediate hunt for the tigress. This done, I put in some practise shots with the double barreled rifle old Trevor had lent me the day before I left Cha Kum.

I scored several inners on a target I rigged up in the compound, but I was never much of a shot and hit the bull but rarely. If I had a job in hitting the

plumb center of a stationary object, how would I fare when aiming at the tiny vital spot in a swiftly moving tigress? I'd have to trust to luck, I told myself, or to bagging her while I myself was safely up in a *machan*.

On the morning after my arrival I inspected the remains of the latest bullock she had killed. They were lying under some dense thorn scrub and, since there were no suitable trees nearby, the use of a *machan* was plainly out of the question. Much against my inclination, therefore, I decided to follow the bullocks home for several evenings in the hopes that I'd bag her in this manner.

The first three evenings passed without a sign of her, and if another one did likewise I knew that I'd have to put off all further attempt for some time to come; my forest work was being neglected and a long round tour of inspection would have to be undertaken at once if my native foremen were to be kept up to the mark. One more fruitless evening, I told myself, and the tigress would have to be left to Grainger or the villagers.

Luck, however, attended me on the fourth evening. I was about fifty yards behind the rearmost animal, on a little path that ran from the grazing grounds to the village, when the killer broke from the fringing jungle some forty yards ahead of me and made straight for the last bullock.

Every detail of the way she killed is impressed upon me. She did not spring upon her prey, as I had imagined she would; instead, she glided over the short space of intervening ground and then, when almost level with the bullock, stood up on her hind legs with both forepaws in the air. I can see her now, *standing upright*. The gliding business had been horrible enough, but the sight of that great thing looming up on hind legs was positively ghastly.

The human brain is accustomed to judge the size of animals by the appearance they present when standing on all fours, and I'll never forget the shock I had as a boy when I saw a collie raise itself erect and affectionately place its paws against its master's shoulders. Before, that dog had been just a dog to me; yet there was that selfsame creature towering all of a sudden right over my head as though some devil had entered it and endowed it with enormous proportions. No; I didn't like that moment, somehow; and if a mere dog had scared me, what of the tigress now?

Huge? The brute was colossal! I'm well over six feet myself, but I felt like a midget as for one horrified second—and it couldn't have been longer than that, though it seemed like hours—I stared at the gigantic striped thing ahead of me. Then down came those outstretched front paws, down over the off side of the bullock's neck. With hind legs braced against the animal's near side, she wrenched, and the bullock, it's neck broken by the frightful strain, fell dead in a twitching heap.

Now came the moment I wanted. She was motionless over the kill, and I raised rifle to shoulder. She must have sensed my presence, for she turned her head toward me. The tail twitched, and the great face opened in a ghastly snarl. Aiming straight at the cavernous, whiskered mouth, I let drive with my first barrel.

My heart clamped violently. In that infinitesimal period that elapses between squeezing the trigger and seeing the result of the shot, one single, terrifying question absorbs the brain and sets the body rigid: Will the second barrel have to be used?

BREATH returned to me in flooding throbs; the tigress was stretched out by the kill. Not a muscle in the tawny body moved, and in my excitement I forgot myself so far as to rush several paces toward her. When within thirty yards of the form, however, sanity came back and with it the need for caution. Tigers, apparently dead, had been known before now to galvanize into fierce, tearing life again, and I had better tread warily.

Stooping, I collected clouts of earth and stones, which I heaved at the motionless form. No sign of life ensued, and I was in the act of striding boldly up to her when a voice sounded in my ear—

"Careful old soul, aren't you?"

I whirled on my heel, to see Ralph Grainger standing directly behind me on the path. He had his rifle with him, and his features were twisted in a sarcastic grin.

"You!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, and just one minute too late. Pity you won that bet, though. I'd made sure . . ."

The words snapped short, and his eyes froze over my shoulder. His rifle flashed upward, but no sound issued from it. I spun round again and faced down the path. Tigress had disappeared.

Numbed with surprise, I stood rooted in my tracks till Grainger seized my elbow.

"Come on," he said, and together we hastened up to the kill.

Not a sign of blood, however, led into the jungle or besmeared that part of the ground on which she had lain; had it not been for the mute evidence of the dead bullock the happenings of the last few minutes might have taken place in a dream.

"Stunned," said Grainger briefly, as he saw the query in my eyes. "Bullet must have grazed her skull, that's all, and knocked her out for awhile. I guess she's as lively now as she's ever been."

I peered through the grim aisles of the forest. The light was now rapidly failing, and in another half hour the darkness would be complete. I'd had one ordeal of being followed up at night, and I didn't want another.

"We're going straight back to my bungalow," I said. "No more hanging around here."

"Might follow her up a little way, if we can."

"You fool," I said shortly. "Want to commit suicide? Come on!"

He had the sense to follow me, and in twenty minutes' time, for the path was quite close to my compound, we were seated in comfortable armchairs absorbing a much needed whisky and water.

"And now," said I, as I put my empty glass down, "perhaps you'll tell me how you came butting in on the scene."

He waved an arm to the north.

"Quite simple. I wasn't in my bungalow when I got your note. Happened to be in camp measuring timber a couple of miles upstream from here, so I made a few inquiries through my coolies. Result, knew what you were doing and decided to steal a march on you. Cut through the jungle this evening—I first crossed the river from my camp, of course—and arrived on the path about the time I judged the bullocks would be going home. Ran it a shade too fine, though, and the next thing I knew was hearing your rifle, which told me you were ahead of me."

I handed him a cigaret and lighted one myself.

"I saw you raise your rifle," I said to him, "when we were talking on the path. That meant you saw the tigress move. Why didn't you actually fire?"

"For the simple reason that she was gone before I could. She must have given some warning twitch, I suppose, that attracted my attention, but the next moment I was looking at nothing. Nothing, man! Speed? The word doesn't express what I saw—or didn't see—in the least. It was incredible."

"Any use building a *machan* over the dead bullock? Plenty of trees around it."

"None whatever," he answered. "She won't return to *that* because she's learned a bit about rifle fire by now. I reckon that brute's going to give us some lively times before we corner her."

"Are you going to stalk her on foot while I'm away?" I asked him. "I must start in on some work tomorrow."

"When I've time, but I'm pretty busy myself." He rose and walked toward the veranda. "Well, I'll be getting back to camp."

"Do you want a lantern?" I asked.

"What the deuce do I want a lantern for? It's only two miles, and I'm not a child."

We said good night, but at the head of the steps he paused.

"This bet," said he. "It's going to prove an interesting one unless I'm very much mistaken."

I nodded in agreement, though I little thought at the time how much I'd have reason to remember those words.

CHAPTER IX

FEAR

I SPENT the following three weeks making an extended tour round my territory. As already stated, my forest consisted of the whole of one side of the valley through which the river Mae Fah ran, while Grainger had the other. The valley was some fifty miles long and thirty miles across at the widest point, though the average width was not more than twelve or fifteen miles. On my side of the river the girdling records showed over one hundred thousand teak trees, all of which had to be felled, logged, measured, hammered, then placed in the Mae Fah for "ounging" down by elephants to the great main river Mae Lome.

Once the logs had reached the Mae Lome, they would float unattended down to the rafting stations in the south, where they would be made up into rafts before setting out on the final two hundred miles of their long journey down to Bangkok. Some idea of the distance and difficulties involved may be gathered from the fact that the average time that elapsed between a log's being placed in the Mae Fah and its reaching Bangkok was about five years, the longest case on record being fifteen.

I'd now been in charge of this particular valley for nine years, during which period I'd sent about fifty thousand logs, or half the total amount, down the Mae Fah and out into the main stream. I'd therefore got as many again still to extract, but, dealing with such an immense amount of timber, you have to work gradually. If too many logs are placed in the river, when the rises come in the rainy season the timber will get hopelessly jamed in treacherous, rock strewn corners, and however hard you work your elephants you'll be lucky if you get a quarter of the delivery free and away to Bangkok, five hundred miles south. The teak, therefore, has to be dragged out from one side creek at a time in limited quantities, and not before the river is clear of one lot can the next be started on. The speed of the work also is dependent to a certain extent on the number of elephants, coolies, mahouts and buffaloes allowed by one's company.

In my case, I had roughly one hundred elephants, five hundred carting buffaloes and some two thousand brown skinned men. The latter were mostly under the charge of native foremen appointed by me; these gentlemen differed from the others, in appearance at least, to the extent of wearing disreputable looking pants in place of the usual loin cloth; otherwise there was nothing much to choose between them and the men they bossed, though they served to take a certain amount of responsibility from off my shoulders.

Now that mid-February had arrived, the hot weather was beginning to set in. Low though the Mae Fah had been in December, the river was still falling every day, while the forest branches were rapidly shedding their leaves. In Siam the hot weather is the equivalent of fall or autumn in colder countries, save that it is a dry autumn, with a fierce, harsh sun and cloudless skies. My elephants, therefore, had already been sent to rest camps; their main duties, involving the dragging and ounging of timber in the rains, were over, and no elephant can safely be allowed to work in a fiery sun if its health, even life, be valued.

The work of felling, too, was temporarily at an end; the ground being hard

as iron, the precious trees would either split badly on crashing to earth or else they would run the risk of being burnt by the numerous jungle fires that spring up like lightning in various parts of the forest. In consequence, my main task at the moment was to superintend the carting of the timber that had been felled in the previous rains at points too far distant from the river for elephants to be used. I'd had special cart roads built, and along these I found the patient buffaloes hauling the ungainly carts laden with huge balks of timber.

I felt sorry for the brutes, working in such heat, but there was no other course; the logs had to be extracted somehow, and in the rains the roads would have been impassable mud.

My elephants, comfortably tucked away in a shady strip of cool evergreen right up in the sources of the Mae Fah, I found fit and strong. I doctored a few who still had chain galls left over from the previous rains, and isolated a couple whom I suspected of having contracted *surra*. I then visited each of the carting camps, inspecting the daily rate of cartage and impressing on the foreman the need for resting their buffaloes in the worst heat of the afternoon, after which I made tracks for the camp where I had first set eyes on the tigress.

On arrival there I set up my tent and prepared for a four days' stay in the locality. This camp, which was situated midway between my bungalow and Grainger's, was often used by me because close by it an important cart road ran out from the forest and terminated on the bank of the river Mae Fah. Down this road scores of teak logs had been rumbling daily for the past few weeks, and now some two thousand of them were laid out in neat rows on an open space of ground overlooking the river. When the rains broke my elephants would roll the timber down the bank and into the water, but in the meantime every single log had to be measured and classified by me, then hammered by the coolies with my company's mark for subsequent identification in Bangkok. It promised to be a hot job, with no shade anywhere, but I started in on it with a swing.

By the evening of the fourth day the work was finished; the last log had been measured and hammered, and as the coolies straightened their weary backs I sat down on the bank to rest awhile before returning to my tent. Beneath me the sand bars of the fallen river shone golden in the mellow light; the smoke from some jungle fire hovered motionless in the quiet air; the trees, now all but bare of leaves, towered silently; evening had brought quiet hush to the earth.

The very peacefulness of the scene served to remind me of the tigress. Somewhere, in that setting fit only for mildness and beauty, she was lurking even now. She might be near Grainger's bungalow, she might be near mine; or perhaps she was crouching at this moment within a few hundred yards of my present camp. There was no telling where she might be, for, although three weeks had elapsed since I'd started out on my tour, not a word had been brought to me of her whereabouts.

I had sent coolies from time to time both to Ralph Grainger and to the old headman at Hwe Tark, but the replies they had brought me were invariably the same: nothing had been seen or heard of the brute since the day I had knocked her senseless. She must be either lying dead in some jungle *nullah*, I reflected, or else she had gone back to her natural prey of pig and deer, and the bet, like the one on the polo match, had ended in a draw.

I hadn't been sitting on the bank for more than ten minutes when I heard the muffled thud of a horse's hoofs drumming on the sandbars away to the north. The sound was followed by the appearance of Grainger on the gray mare, and he was plainly in a hurry, for he rounded a sharp bend in the river at a terrific pace. On seeing me he jerked the mare's reins and forced her up the bank to the accompaniment of a rattle of loose earth and stones. Having reached the top, in one

bound he was off her and standing beside me.

"Suppose you didn't think it worth while coming," were his first words. He spoke them viciously, and I sprang to my feet.

"What the devil are you talking about?" I cried. "Been out too long in the sun, man?"

"You never got my note this afternoon?"

"Note? I never knew you'd sent me one."

"Ah," said he, "that accounts for it."

He looked pale and agitated, which was very unlike Grainger, and a sense of catastrophe chilled my heart.

"Out with it," I cried. "What's happened?"

"My dun pony."

"Yes?"

"Killed after being mauled by the tigress at half past two this afternoon."

"Good Lord! Where?"

"Just behind my compound. The dun was grazing with the gray when she came out at him."

"Was he killed instantly?"

"No—worse luck. He must have got into his stride before she actually reached him, and he was able to shake her off, I suppose. At least that's what a coolie said who saw the incident."

"Well?"

"I shot him."

"The dun!"

"Yes," he said bitterly, "the dun. He was slashed. Thought I might save him at first, that's why I sent a note to you; you might have been able to help me with him. But it was no good. A few hours, and I knew it was hopeless. So I put him out of pain. Poor brute."

Grainger lighted a cigaret and puffed at it nervously. As for me, I felt acutely sorry for the man. He loved his ponies, loved them with a single hearted devotion that must have made the shooting of one of them by his own hand a frightful ordeal. If it had been the gray mare I trembled to think how Grainger would have acted; he was fond enough of the dun, but the mare was half his life.

"I'm damned sorry, Grainger," I said feebly.

"Oh, shut up!" he snapped irritably. "That tigress, though. I'll get her, or she'll get me. It's one of the two."

HE STARED straight in front of him with hard, relentless eyes, but a thought had flashed through my brain and I forced him back to the present.

"That note," I reminded him. "Strange it never fetched up. Whom did you send with it?"

"My pony boy."

"On foot?"

"Naturally. He couldn't ride the mare, and I'd no other pony."

"Had you had a row with him that might have caused him to bolt?"

"Not at the time, though I was reserving a good hiding for him later."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Mean? He'd no business to leave the ponies unattended, outside the compound."

"In that case he probably knew what was coming to him, and the note served as an opportunity for him to clear out," I suggested.

"Not him," said Grainger. "He'd never leave me of his own accord. I know too much of his past for that to happen."

"Well, where's he gone to, then?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," said Grainger.

I saw that his mind was still brooding on the dun, and I shook his arm violently.

"That pony boy," I snapped. "What time did he leave your compound with the note?"

"About a quarter to three, I should think."

"And he knew I was camped here?"

"Of course he did. News travels around. Every man in my compound, including myself, knew you'd been here for four days."

"He left at a quarter to three," I mused. "And he'd four miles to go. Should have been here at four o'clock at the latest,

and now it's close on six. Grainger, I don't like it."

Our positions were now reversed; it was Grainger who seemed slow on the uptake, while I did all the reasoning. As he continued to stare at me blankly, I came straight to the point.

"The tigress," I said. "She's tried to kill once this afternoon, and failed. So she'll try again, won't she? And anything that happened along."

"Ah." At last Grainger became alive to the situation. "You may have hit it. Guess we'd better make a search at once."

"Yes, but where? You've just followed the same route as the pony boy, yet you saw nothing unusual. Or did you? Try and think."

"That's where you're wrong," he answered. "In all probability I didn't follow in the pony boy's tracks. Actually, I rode along the river bed the whole way down from my compound. Cooler there and more air than in among the trees. But *he'd* have followed the path on the opposite bank."

"Not necessarily," I broke in. "Now that the river's so low."

"But think of the time he left, man. About three in the afternoon. The heat on the sandbars would have been terrific, at that time of the day, while the path would have been shaded to a certain extent."

I didn't pause a second longer, for I saw at once that he was right. Bidding him wait for me, I ran back to my camp, which lay about two hundred yards inland and just out of sight of the river, and yelled to my syce to saddle Sunstar. I grabbed my torch, Trevor's rifle and some ball cartridges, and while Sunstar was being saddled made a few hasty inquiries among my servants. They answered, however, as I knew they would; not one of them had seen a sign of Grainger's pony boy around the camp, and five minutes after leaving him I had rejoined Grainger on the river bank. The light was already failing, and we'd have to make precious quick time if we wanted to discover anything before dark. I held out my rifle and ammunition to Grainger.

"Here. Take these," I said quickly. "What the hell made you forget to bring your own, though?"

"Thinking of something else, I suppose," he answered. "But I'm not taking yours."

"You are, Grainger. You're miles the better shot of us two."

"It's an unfair advantage," he muttered. "If I left mine behind, that's my fault."

Even in a moment like this he'd remembered that bet! But I cared nothing for bets when lives hung in the balance, and I fairly thrust my rifle upon him. We pounded across the dry river, mounted the opposite bank, then trotted, with him leading, along the little path that ran up to the north. Gloom now enveloped us: gloom from the darkening forest and gloom from the fear of what lay ahead.

CHAPTER X

MAN EATER

ANXIOUS though we were to hurry, we daren't ride too fast for fear that our eyes might miss a clue. Peering anxiously to right and left, we forged steadily ahead, but when we'd made a mile and a quarter the light became so bad that unless we actually stumbled upon a body our chances of discovering the missing man that night seemed hopeless.

I was about to switch on my torch, which would help us to a certain extent, when by sheer luck I spotted a tiny white object resting in the scrub that bordered the side of the path farthest from the river. I whispered to Grainger and we halted and dismounted. Flashing on my torch, I bent and examined the object: it was Grainger's note to me, crumpled and blood stained, but recognizable.

My torch rayed on to the undergrowth. Something had been dragged through that undergrowth and into the jungle behind; the signs were unmistakable, and my flesh rose in little, stinging prickles. Fear

was creeping in upon me as I stooped there in the haunted darkness.

Suddenly a faint breeze swept through the forest, and I choked at the ghastly scent it bore. The smell in my nostrils was stale, nauseating, feline! The ponies evidently caught it, for they began to plunge and kick, and I knew they might bolt at any moment. I seized Sunstar's bridle and vaulted into the saddle.

"Out of it," I cried to Grainger. "Back to my camp at once. Nothing more we can do for the poor devil—now."

I didn't wait for Grainger to expostulate; the victim must have been beyond all human aid long ago, and for us to stay any longer in the vicinity now that dark had fallen would be to court death ourselves. I thundered down the path the way we had come, and was soon relieved to hear Grainger following me up behind. How neither of us sustained a nasty fall I can't imagine; we were going down a narrow track overhung by creepers and bamboo, and the light was negligible, nevertheless we reached the point where we had to recross the river unharmed, and by seven o'clock we were in the comparative safety of my camp.

"You're going to stay the night here with me," I told Grainger, as I dismounted. "No riding back to your bungalow tonight."

"I'll have to," he answered. "Nowhere to put the mare."

I glanced at the stockade. It was made for two ponies only, and a risk would have to be taken:

"I'll take out the black and tie him up by my tent," I said. "That'll leave the stockade for Sunstar and the mare."

"Nonsense," he said sharply. "I'll not have you risking one of your ponies for mine."

"Not so much risk as all that," I replied. "Otherwise frankly I wouldn't do it. The tigress has killed once today, and the chances are a thousand to one she won't kill again for at least thirty-six hours. Come on. Get that mare of yours into the stockade. We've to think out some plan of action before we turn in tonight."

With his own hands he unsaddled and rubbed down the sweating gray, and when she and Sunstar had been made comfortable in the stockade and the black securely tethered to a tree, Grainger and I walked into my tent. An oil lamp was burning on the little table, and we turned and faced each other across it. For several seconds neither of us spoke, then Grainger broke the silence—

"Man eater!" he said sharply.

Man eater! The dreaded word that was to run like fire through the jungle, leaving death and terror in its wake; man eater; the very air grew colder as it struck upon the senses.

A bottle of whisky stood near the lamp, but only one glass, for naturally my boy hadn't been expecting a visitor. I poured out a stiff tot, added a little water, and pushed the glass over to Grainger.

"For you," I said briefly.

He shook his head, and I could have sworn a grin flitted across his features.

"Reckon you need it most, Foster."

"You're my guest," I said steadily, and with a shrug of the shoulders he drained the glass.

"Dinner?" I said, after I too had drunk. "Or shall we discuss plans for tomorrow first?"

"Let's get some food inside us, and then we'll be able to think better."

"Right." I shouted for the boy, and ten minutes later we were sitting down to dinner. Native cooks mayn't be paragons, but in one respect they excel; they'll produce at a moment's notice food in sufficient quantity for half a dozen unexpected guests. Where the food comes from and how it is cooked so quickly is a mystery which no white man has ever been able to discover, and perhaps it's as well he should remain in the dark if he's to enjoy his meals at all.

We ate our dinner in silence. My boy served the four courses in his usual manner, attentively and with complete lack of expression on his dusky features. But I noticed one thing particularly; to get from the cook's tent to mine he had to cross over the camp clearing, and whereas

in normal circumstances he would have brought the dishes by himself, now two coolies had attached themselves to him. They walked on either side of him during his short journeys to and fro, and they both carried knives. The whole of my camp, therefore, knew what had happened.

Neither I nor Grainger had so far breathed a word to any of the natives, and they couldn't have learned the truth from overhearing our conversation because none of them understood English; yet they knew, and I could only presume that they'd seen our anxious faces on returning from upriver and so had put two and two together.

When the meal had been cleared away I and my companion sat on either side of the little table with drinks at our elbow. The lamp lighted up Grainger's dark features in sharp relief.

"Just you and I, Foster," said he.

"Well?" I demanded.

"And the bet, of course."

"Damn the bet," I answered. "Let's get down to business."

For the better part of two hours we discussed ways and means of rounding up the tigress, and finally we decided that our first course of action would be to inspect the remains in the morning with a view to sitting up over them the following night. Grainger's rifle, of course, would have to be fetched from his bungalow, but that could be done during daylight, and by riding up the dry, open river bed he'd lessen the danger of a surprise attack on him. Should we meet with no success tomorrow night, there were other methods to be employed: bamboo traps, concealed pits, poisoned bait, drives by coolies and villagers, all these might have to be resorted to before long, and one by one we went through them. By ten o'clock we'd thought of nearly every known method of killing a man eater, and the time had come for us to turn in.

"A final drink," said Grainger. "That's a good brand of whisky, yours. Must try it myself."

"Pre-war," I told him, filling the glasses. "Still a few chink merchants in Bangkok who've got stocks."

"Well, here's luck."

"Luck, Grainger," said I.

He replaced the drink on the table.

"Do you mean that?" he asked suddenly.

"Mean it? Of course I do. Why ask?"

"I—just wondered."

A pause followed. Did I quite honestly wish him luck? I asked myself. Perhaps last month in Cha Kum the answer might have been no, for a cloud had come between us then, but now—? Those emotions were stirring in me again. I liked the man because of the hardships and dangers we had so often shared together; they formed a bond that can scarcely be guessed at by those who dwell in cities, and yet there *was* that other side of his nature, dark, callous, utterly hateful.

"Chuck it, Grainger," I said, suddenly and violently.

He laughed and turned the conversation.

"Told your servants anything yet?" he asked.

"No. But I will tomorrow."

"They know already, man."

"I'm quite aware of that. But they'll have to be warned officially by me."

"Granted. But how do you think they know when we haven't told them a word?"

"Intuition, I suppose. Besides, any fool could have put two and two together on seeing our behavior this evening."

"Perhaps so, but they'd have known without all that. Don't you agree? Remember how we heard of the death of young Cartwright?"

"Yes, a villager told us."

"And he told us a day after Cartwright died. Yet that villager was one hundred miles away from the actual scene."

"News gets around in the jungle," I observed.

"Yes, but *how?*"

"From one man to another, I suppose."

"Nonsense." Grainger leaned forward over the table, and his eyes were alert with

interest. "I could quote scores of instances, and so could you, when that would have been impossible. In Africa—drums. In Northern Australia—smoke. Drums and smoke, sending out full and complicated messages over hundreds of miles almost as quickly as the telegraph. That's pretty good, isn't it? But what about countries where they use nothing! New Guinea, for instance. Natives there send news without any visible or audible methods whatever. Same in Siam here, though to a lesser extent. Marvelous? It's more than that; it's uncanny."

"Must be telepathy, then," I suggested.

"Telepathy?" He waved an arm in disgust. "It's a word we whites have coined for something we don't understand. And there are still a devil of a lot of things we don't understand, in spite of our civilized airs and graces. How do tigers see in the dark? How do birds get that sense of direction they have when migrating? What are cats thinking about when they sit in front of a fire at home? What happens to us all when we die? Nobody knows. Nobody ever will know."

The night was quite eery enough without all this sort of talk, and I rose to my feet abruptly.

"They won't," I said, "and we'll leave it at that. I'm going to turn in. You can have my bed and I'll sleep on a blanket on the ground sheet."

He refused my offer, however, and ten minutes later he was curled up on the floor with one of my light blankets over him. I was quickly undressed, but as I went to turn out the light on the table I heard the faintest of sounds outside my tent. With my hand poised in the act of rolling down the wick, I listened intently. A low, hoarse breathing could now plainly be distinguished from the other noises of the jungle night, and I turned quickly to where Grainger lay.

"Grainger!" I said sharply.

He was not asleep and rose up on one elbow.

"Eh? What is it?"

"Listen. I heard something."

Again the breathing, and I thought of the rifle by my bed. Then, to my surprise, Grainger laughed.

"Forgotten your black pony, you great hulk? He's just outside the tent."

"Hell," I exclaimed in vexation.

"Getting nerved up, aren't you? Want your mother to tuck you up in bed?"

His eyes were shining with amusement, and I saw that now he'd recovered somewhat from the shock of the dun pony's death he was beginning to enjoy himself. Danger in any shape or form he simply loved, and the presence of a man eating tigress not far from the camp was providing him with the thrill of his life. No wonder he enjoyed the sight of my being rattled.

"That's one up to you," I conceded. "For the present at least." And, turning out the light, I tumbled into bed.

Grainger, I believe, was soon fast asleep, but try as I might I could not close my eyes. I had a strange, uneasy feeling that we were on the threshold of grim and tragic events, the outcome of which there could be no foretelling. For hour after hour I gazed into the insect singing darkness, listening to the voices of the wild that now and then floated eerily in from the surrounding forest. Was I changing, I wondered, changing into something different from my old stolid self? I could not tell, but of one fact I felt quite certain: I was learning the fear that comes with an increasingly vivid imagination.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMING OF THE TIGER

NEXT morning we received some inkling of the numerous difficulties that were to beset us in dealing with the man eater. The remains of Grainger's unfortunate servant we quickly discovered, but when it came to ordering our coolies to build a *machan* over the body they one and all flatly refused. The ghost of the dead man now rode upon the beast that had killed him, while sundry other devils of the most formidable variety would most certainly be haunting the

scene of the tragedy. Not for the price of a thousand elephants would they go near the spot, so they informed us, though we, being white lords, had naturally nothing to fear—at least from the devils they had added hastily.

The end of it was that I sent them about their routine jobs. Neither Grainger nor I wasted our breath in futile arguments with them; the men were obviously almost beside themselves with fright, and knowing the absolute belief in devils that haunts the native mind, we had to be content with a few muffled curses when they left us. Grainger's words of the previous evening, "Just you and I, Foster," were coming nearer the mark than either of us had expected.

Since we could not build a *machan*, we were obliged to balance ourselves on the forks of a tree overlooking the body. We spent a rotten, uncomfortable night, and to make matters worse the tigress never showed herself. When dawn at last paled, and stiff and weary we climbed down to earth, we realized that we'd have to change our tactics; in all probability the tigress had been fully aware of our presence up that tree, with the result that she'd never visit the kill again. Some other method must therefore be employed.

We spent the next two evenings lying concealed on the opposite bank in the hope that she might still be lurking in the vicinity and come down to the river to drink. But no luck attended us, and early the following morning we received the serious news that a man belonging to a small village near Grainger's bungalow had been killed the previous night.

We hastened to the village, to find that the inhabitants, after the manner of my coolies and now those of Grainger's as well, refused to approach the spot where the body lay. After a good deal of argument, however, they consented to build some bamboo traps and a concealed pit in places within a mile's radius of the last killing. While our coolies helped them, Grainger and I supervised the work.

At the end of a week we were in despair. The men's hearts weren't in their tasks, and the traps turned out to be miserable affairs hardly capable of capturing a small panther, let alone a full grown tigress. After inspecting them we returned to Grainger's bungalow, in which I had been staying with him for the past few days.

"One thing's very plain," began my companion, after shouting to his boy for drinks. "We can count no more on the natives helping us. And I'd like to flog every mother's son of them."

"They're scared stiff," I said. "It's no use blaming 'em. As they obviously won't agree to form a drive, what about bringing our elephants out of their rest camps? They might manage to round up the killer if we can find out her rough whereabouts first."

"Elephants?" Grainger shook his head impatiently. "What can they do? We're not in India. They aren't trained to rifle fire; their mahouts would go sick at the very thought of getting to close quarters with a man eater; and this jungle's not suitable for that kind of beating."

Again I had to confess that Grainger was right. Even if his first two points had not been correct, the third alone rendered my suggestion impracticable. Now that I paused to think, the rounding up of tigers by elephants has to be undertaken in fairly level, open jungle, while here, save for a few small paddy fields adjoining some of the villages, there was scarcely a square fifty yards of level ground for miles around. Our valley consisted of series of undulating hills, covered with an unbroken mantle of jungle and culminating in the two high ridges that overlooked the basin of the Mae Fah river; as such, it formed an ideal hunting ground for the tigress, but not for us.

"We'll have to stalk her on foot," I said eventually. "But we haven't heard of her for a week now, and she may be anywhere."

"Chances are that she'll roam up and

down the valley, taking a man here and a man there as she feels inclined," said Grainger reflectively. "We'd better wait, therefore, till we hear of another killing and then hasten to the spot and try to bag her on foot, as you said. It'll be some job, but get her we will in the end, even if one of us—"

"Quite," I broke in hastily. "But there's one thing I don't understand. She's a man eater, yet why have no more deaths been reported for over a week? From what we saw, she couldn't have returned more than once to her last kill."

Grainger made a gesture of impatience.

"Believe that old story that once a tiger turns to human flesh it'll eat nothing else? Piffle! The story's on a par with the statement that a man eater's always old and mangy. This tigress, to judge from what we already know of her, seems to like a varied menu, and that's what makes her so dangerous. If she'd only stick to humans she'd probably concentrate on one particular village and we'd bag her in no time. But as things are—" he shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"And meantime," I said, "our work's going to the deuce. We haven't done a stroke for over a fortnight, and what our foremen are doing heaven knows. Sleeping, probably, or bolted to their homes."

"Then we'll soon alter that," snapped my companion. "We'll start in on work this very afternoon, but—" he paused—"directly either you or I hear reliable news of the killer, it's agreed that we inform the other—at once! We can then meet wherever she's reported.

I nodded, and an hour later we parted for the interior of our respective forests.

I FOUND, as I'd expected, that all carting had come to a standstill. Both foremen and coolies were idling in their camps, but I soon had them back at the carts. The work had only to be done by day, and provided the men kept well together and returned to camp by late afternoon they were running very little risk. The chief danger, I pointed out to them, lay in single coolies lagging behind the others, and once they'd grasped the idea the work went better than I'd ever known it to do before. Even the worst slackers among them galvanized into quite remarkable activity.

Once the carting had restarted, I set about the inspection of some exhausted areas. These areas are ones reported by the foremen as worked out of teak, but more often than not a considerable number of excellent logs are left behind because the elephant foremen have been too lazy to drag them out, and it was my task to rectify this. The job was a hard one, entailing as it did climbing up and down terrific hills under the burning heat of the sun. When I found a log abandoned high up in the sources of some side creek, I took a note of its size and position with a view to dragging it out by elephant on the break of the rains, then toiled on until I found the next.

Hard work, as I have said, and not rendered any more pleasant by the knowledge that I might unexpectedly come across the tigress while I was doing it.

I was a jungle-walla, and she a jungle animal. Both of us, therefore, *lived* in the jungle, and as I perspired up those sun baked hills I didn't forget the fact. None the less, though I kept Trevor's rifle in my tent, I never took it out with me by day; my work was quite tiring enough without dragging a heavy weapon around, while to employ a coolie as bearer would have been worse than useless; if I accidently stumbled upon the tigress things would happen quickly; she'd either be out of sight or else on top of me long before the coolie, whether he bolted or not, would have time to hand the weapon over. There was also another aspect of the affair: to take the rifle constantly about with me would show that I was decidedly worried, and my men, who were unarmed themselves, would thus be set a bad example. I accordingly tramped those hills without a weapon of any kind.

The beginning of April found me

camped on a side tributary of the Mae Fah. Nothing had been heard of the tigress now for close on a month, and my fears were on the wane. Being short of foodstuff, on the first evening in my new camp I took out my shotgun and strolled along one bank of the tributary in the hopes of bagging a green pigeon or jungle fowl. I had no luck, however, and after a mile's fruitless tramping sat down to rest with my back to the buttress of a large cotton tree. I was idly contemplating the bed of the dried up stream, when out of the corner of my eye I detected a movement on my left. Something had emerged from the forest on the opposite bank and was making for the stream.

For a short space of time I dared not turn my head and look fully at that shape; fear held me rigid. My shotgun would give as much protection as a pea shooter against an elephant, and to climb one of the numerous trees around was out of the question. I was too heavy, for one thing, and my boots would hinder me. The tigress, I thought, had cornered me properly.

I licked my lips, which had gone suddenly dry, and cautiously turned my head. There, in full view, and standing on the sandy bed close by a pool of water, stood a tawny, striped form. The form blurred as the beating of my heart obscured my vision, then my senses cleared and a flood of relief swept over me. It wasn't the tigress at all, but a very big tiger.

Keeping absolutely still, I gazed at him in fascination. What impressed me most was his size; as Grainger had said of the brute he had shot, he was so *huge;* the tigress had been large for one of her sex, but this fellow looked simply enormous. Like her, the stripes made his coat appear extraordinarily dark, while the massiveness of the body was almost unbelievable. Terror and beauty were marked in every line of his splendid form.

After standing by the pool for several seconds, he walked right into it. Although of the cat tribe, he seemed to like the touch of the water, for he went in belly deep and began to drink with a huge, coarse tongue. Tiny ripples lapped round his savage head, and I remember wondering whether he minded getting his whiskers wet. He seemed to have plenty of time at his disposal, and was quite oblivious of me, scarcely fifty paces away. But I knew that a tiger's scent is very poor, and provided I kept utterly still he might not hear or even see me, for my khaki jungle kit blended with the color of the earth. I sat on, frozen to my tree.

When he had drunk his fill he leisurely emerged from the pool and stretched one hind leg after the other exactly like an enormous cat. This done, he was about to lope into the forest when he suddenly changed his mind; he swung round his body and stared at me straight in the face instead.

Had I made some unintentional movement? To this day I don't know, but there he was with his light amber eyes burning right into mine. His small, pointed ears were cocked, but beyond the flare of those eyes he might have been lifeless. Not one muscle, not one hair about him stirred; he resembled some beautiful painting by a master hand.

I was conscious not so much of fear as of intense interest as I met his gaze. He, however, regarded me with a sort of mild curiosity and made no attempt to inspect me at closer quarters. If the human eye holds power over wild beasts—which I doubt—mine certainly didn't over him; he displayed neither rage nor timidity, and finally, being evidently of the opinion that I wasn't worth bothering about, he gave a "woof" of disgust and cantered heavily up the bank into the forest.

I took off my topee, wiped the sweat from my forehead and, abandoning my original idea of shooting pigeon, walked back to camp a good deal quicker than I'd left it.

Once in my tent I dwelt long on the perfect picture he had presented, but I made no plans for killing him. Tigers

were fairly plentiful in Northern Siam, and he was probably a game eating animal who would leave men and their livestock in peace for the whole of his career. I'd have liked his skin, of course, but my work must come first, and if any hunting had to be done it should be after the tigress. In a fortnight's time I'd almost forgotten the incident.

TOWARD the end of April, however, while in another part of my forest, I actually saw him again. Events seem to run in cycles; you'll live for months on end in the jungle without encountering any excitement whatever, then all of a sudden you'll be pitchforked willy-nilly into a whole series of hair-raising adventures.

In this case I was back in my bungalow at Hwe Tark, attending to some correspondence, and following my custom had taken out Sunstar for an evening gallop along the dry bed of the Mae Fah. We'd made about a mile and a half downstream in the direction of the distant Mae Lome, when on rounding a corner I came full upon that selfsame tiger. I pulled up Sunstar on his haunches and for a few agonized seconds the tiger and I stared at each other.

His size alone proclaimed him to be the same brute, though now his demeanor was very different. He was plainly in a rage at having being disturbed, and his great mouth opened in a snarl. His tail twitched nervously from side to side, his eyes smoldered with hidden fire, and one forepaw came off the ground in ominous fashion. That meant the sway before the charge, but I didn't wait to see it out; I had Sunstar round in a quicker turn than ever he'd done at polo, after which I put a good five hundred yards of river bed between me and that snarling death.

I then pulled up the reluctant Sunstar and listened intently. Now that I was out of sight of the tiger I wasn't particularly afraid; he'd made no attempt to follow me up, and in any case I'd a swift pony under me and a bungalow close at hand. Soothing Sunstar as best I could, I strained my ears for any unusual sound behind me. Tigers sometimes moan when hunting, and this one might give me some indication as to where he was lying up. Would he cross over to Grainger's forest, or would he remain in mine after he'd left the river? Perhaps, after all, that magnificent skin of his was worth a day or two off work.

I heard him. An indescribable sound, half moan, half squeak, was borne on the gentle evening breeze; it came, as far as I could gather, from the spot where I'd just left him, and thus gave me no clue as to the direction he would shortly take. I waited a little, and then to my intense surprise I heard the same sound high up in the jungle on my side of the river. He couldn't possibly have traveled all that distance in such a short space of time, and I was puzzling my brains for an explanation when I heard two separate and distinct calls, for calls they were. One came from the river bed, and one from the jungle, and both were made within two seconds. That meant the tiger had a mate, a *tigress* hunting with him now! I drove my heels into Sunstar's flanks and galloped back to my bungalow as fast as he could take me. I'd stayed out quite long enough that evening.

In my bungalow I did a rapid bit of thinking. That tiger had been courting, hence his furious rage at seeing me, and should his mate be *the* tigress—which was more than likely—where before there had been one man eater there might soon be two. The tigress kills a man; the male, though reluctant at first, eventually has his first taste of human flesh; again the tigress stalks a human being, but this time the tiger does the killing. He wants to show off before his mate.

My imagination was running away with me, none the less I knew that the danger was very real. I sent word to the village beside my compound warning the inhabitants of the proximity of the tigers, then scribbled a note to Grainger, which I would send to him first thing tomorrow. He might be camped miles away from

my bungalow, and as night was already falling I daren't risk sending messengers out until daylight.

CHAPTER XII

ENEMIES

EARLY next morning I was waked by the boy's hand on my shoulder. He brought news that a deputation of villagers was in the compound and wished to see me. I dressed hastily and ran down the bungalow steps to meet it.

Half the menfolk of Hwe Tark were present, and among them were two poor wretches who were shivering as if with an ague. These two salaamed profoundly, then related a terrible story. They were fishermen, they explained, and together with a comrade for the last week they'd been sleeping out on the banks of the Mae Fah river some eight miles below the village. At dawn this morning they were returning with their catch, but when within two miles of their destination a tigress had sprung out of the jungle and slain their comrade. They were unarmed and thus forced to leave him to his fate. Dropping their catch, they had fled to the village and had now come to seek the white lord's aid.

After making sure of the exact locality, which was close to where I'd come upon the tiger, I dismissed the trembling villagers and got to work at once.

Tearing up my first note to Grainger, I wrote him another of added urgency, and summoned four fast and reliable coolies. One man wouldn't, and shouldn't, travel alone now in the jungle, and soon the four were hastening off with instructions to seek out Grainger and hand him the note. I then seized Trevor's rifle and set out for the scene of the killing.

I didn't like the idea of stalking on my own, especially now that two brutes would probably have to be dealt with, but Grainger mightn't be able to reach my bungalow till late in the evening, and valuable time would be wasted if I awaited his arrival. I strode along the river bank with a nasty, empty feeling in the pit of my stomach and a constant inclination to yawn.

In half an hour I had reached the bend of the river mentioned by the fishermen. Here, I was thankful to see, the jungle on the bank was fairly open; the ground, hard and brittle from the rays of the burning sun, rose gently from the river for a good two hundred yards before meeting deep forest, and only a few clumps of hardy bushes showed in between. My feet, which were clad in rope soled shoes, made no sound on the sandy path that bordered the river, and with my eyes constantly sweeping both the path ahead and the bare ground inland on my right, I forced my unwilling steps nearer and nearer to the scene of the killing.

I came to a patch of disturbed, reddened sand, and halted to listen. From behind a large clump of bushes some eighty yards inland I heard a dreadful, worrying snarl. Both the tiger *and* the tigress were at their ghastly meal.

I left the path and advanced ten paces toward the clump. Again I halted. My life hung on a hair thread. Should I advance farther and let the two deliberately charge me, or should I retire? Fool that I'd been not to have waited for Grainger. How could one man, though he were the finest shot in the world, hope to deal with the present situation?

The problem was solved for me. I could have sworn that I'd made not the slightest sound in my approach, yet as I stood there undecided the snarling stopped and a great head came round the bushes. The tiger had showed himself.

I raised my rifle, then with a coughing roar he charged. I did not see his body; I saw only a furious, ringed face getting bigger and bigger as he lapped up the ground in his stride. Eighty yards dwindled to sixty, sixty to forty . . .

TO BE CONTINUED

AGAINST ALL TRADITION

A Story of Colonial Days

By WILKESON O'CONNELL

FROM far off in the forest came the tremulous hoot of an owl, and James Dean's pipestem snapped as his nerves jumped in response. Mary, his still young and pretty wife, stopped her spinning to regard him curiously from the farther side of the rude hearth.

"What's got into ye lately, James?" she demanded. "Can't ye rest quiet of an evenin' 'thout takin' on like a love sick girl every time an owl screeches?"

Without answering Dean rose and padded in his moccasined feet to the barred door of the cabin. Her eyes followed him, the curiosity in them just falling short of suspicion. In a moment he turned from the peephole that was always let into the upper part of a frontiersman's door.

" 'Twas no true owl," he explained, "but a signal from Joseph. He's to bring me a message from the council fire tonight."

He returned to the hearth and, leaning on the settle back, stood moodily watching the again humming wheel and the slender, industrious figure of his wife in its neat kerchief and calamanco gown.

"Mary," he said at last, "will you not make an end to your thread, and retire for the night?"

She stopped the wheel to look up at him dubiously.

"I did aim to fill the spindle afore I went to bed," she replied. "Why can't ye talk to him in front o' me? I know no Oneida."

He answered her with suppressed passion.

"No, no; I could not endure—" Suddenly breathless, Dean jerked his fringed hunting shirt open at the throat, and then went on, "No, you must leave before he comes."

She stared at him, wide eyed.

"Why, surely, husband," she granted submissively. "If ye put such a point upon it."

"And if the lads waken," continued Dean, "keep them quiet, no matter what you hear."

"Silenter children there never were!" she answered acidly. "There's no call to go a-hushin' of 'em 'fore ever that heathen redskin steps inside the door." She glanced at his quick patting moccasin. "There, there, I'm a-goin', husband. Good night."

"Good night," he returned absently.

With her hand on the peg of the door that led into the bedchamber and only other room of the cabin, she turned to send another puzzled glance in his direction. His preoccupied gaze met it, and suddenly warmed in return.

"Mary!" He went to her, took her in his arms, and kissed her with a fiercely hungry tenderness. "Mary! Mary!" It was a wail, a keen, and cry for help. "Oh, my Mary!"

Scenes of passion were almost unknown on the frontier, particularly between wedded folk. Mary bent back in astonishment, her worn hands grasping his shoulder fringes.

"Why, James!" she ejaculated. "Somethin' *is* ailin' ye!"

There was a light tap on the lintel. Dean gently put his wife from him into the bedroom, closed the door between them, and hurried to unbar the one that led into the night. A man slipped through the opening, and drew the portal to behind him. He was an Oneida warrior of about the same age as Dean—some thirty-odd—and was clothed in only a clout, belt, and moccasins. Tight copper bracelets clasped his arms, an elk's tooth necklace his throat. A single feather dangled from his scalp lock, his sole hirsute adornment, the rest of his head being shaved bare, Iroquois fashion. From his belt hung a swollen pouch of deerskin, a sheathed knife, and a tomahawk. On his chest was tattooed the clan sign of the Owl, but otherwise he was undecorated.

"How!" he greeted Dean, who seized his arm in an intense agitation.

"Quick, quick! Tell me!" the latter demanded, inadvertently in English.

"Ugh!" grunted Joseph Spread-the-Dew. "Big council sit all day, sit all night, sit all day some more. Gabble like wild ducks in the reeds; walk, talk—"

"Hush!" warned Dean, pointing to the bedroom door. "Speak in the Oneida, brother, lest my woman hear and understand . . . What word do you bring?"

Released from the cramping confines of the white man's tongue, the Iroquois spoke naturally and with feeling.

"The word, brother, is—black."

A spasm crossed Dean's face. He stood as if stunned for a long moment. Then—

"Red Antlers is still determined—?"

"When has Red Antlers been turned from any trail his foot is set upon?" asked Spread-the-Dew.

"And had I no friend to throw a trunk across his way?" demanded Dean.

"The first day of the council fire," said Spread-the-Dew sadly, "my brother had many friends about it. But one by one they were all lulled to forgetfulness by the power of Red Antler's speeches."

"All?" echoed Dean. "Even the elder sachem, my foster mother's husband?"

"He spoke for you," replied Spread-the-Dew, "until the last setting of the sun. Then he surrendered his mind, and Red Antler's words prevailed. Belt Extended grows old and weak and quickly tired in these days. Five winters ago he would not have yielded his desire as he did tonight."

Dean began a restless padding up and down the narrow floor.

"I DON'T understand it," he half groaned, half complained. "Why is Red Antlers speaking against me? Before I returned to you, he was my friend. When I was but a green hunter, and he already a powerful war chief, he gave me his sister. When and how have I offended him?"

"Since the League was split, during the days of the Boston war, his mind has turned toward no white man," said Spread-the-Dew.

When Dean spoke again, it was more to himself than to the Iroquois.

"No, I cannot comprehend it. Surely, they do not—cannot—believe that *I* committed the murder?"

Spread-the-Dew shook his head.

"That is not their thought. For I, and the hunters who were with us, have repeatedly reminded the council that my brother traveled with me to Albany the day that Stag-at-the-Brink was found dead."

"Is—is it," Dean hesitated, "on account of the knife?"

Spread-the-Dew answered as uncertainly.

"It may be; I do not know."

"And why," demanded Dean, "have my foster mother and my aunts among the women sent no belts to sachems on my behalf? Why is Eusenia silent—she who adopted me, and nurtured me as tenderly as my own mother would have done?"

The expression of perplexity deepened on the Oneida's countenance.

"It is a riddle without an answer, brother," he replied.

Dean went back to his wolf-like pacing.

"What shall I do?" he muttered. "What can I do?"

"There is but one way left open for my brother now," said Spread-the-Dew composedly. "He must take the trail for the settlements tonight. I come to make clear the path for him."

"No, no!" cried Dean with quick vehemence.

Spread-the-Dew looked at him in surprise.

"My brother grows pale hearted?"

"No!" Dean repudiated the charge with scorn, then his mouth softened. "Yes, for them—" and he pointed toward the bedroom door. "What would become of them, if I should take the trail tonight?"

"They would be put in your place before the council," admitted Spread-the-Dew.

"Hostages, to drag me back to it," said Dean. "Mortally helpless, with none to speak for them, not even themselves. I, at least, have been adopted and nurtured in the Long House—although," he added bitterly, "that is proving a trap, and not the bulwark of strength that I have ever held it.

"No, I must meet the council, unless—How long will it be before the fire is raked out?"

"When the moon rises," replied Spread-the-Dew. "Or, it may be, the brands are already black. What is in my brother's mind?"

"That if the fire should burn till dawn, my woman and sons might take the trail with us."

Spread-the Dew vetoed the suggestion decisively.

"That is not possible. The fire has already burned through two dawnings. It must be raked out soon, lest Belt Extended, in his age and weariness, topple into it. And I have come to make a path for the swift feet of my brother, James Breaking-of-the-Twigs, not a wide road for a white squaw and two feeble children, who will creep no faster than a snail on sand. If my brother goes, he must go alone, and—" with an uneasy glance at the unbarred door—"he must go quickly."

Dean sighed.

"Those are true words," he agreed with resignation. "Therefore I can not go. I will wait for the sachems in my own house."

The decision seemed to bring a measure of relief with it, for, as he folded his arms, his nervous figure took on a composure that was almost lassitude. But Spread-the-Dew leaned toward him urgently.

"My brother," he began, "by the blood that we drank together I beg of you to forego this rash determination! Follow me down the trail, and save your life—"

"Hark!" interrupted Dean, and turned to the cabin door, through which a little old smoke dried squaw was pushing. "My aunt, Molly Deerskin! But come in, come in! My door is still open to you, even though you have let me go undefended before the council."

The old woman's blanket trailed from her shoulder as she hobbled up to lay a scrawny, blackened claw upon Dean's sleeve.

"My nephew," she whimpered, "do not blame us in the lodges. We would have sent many strong belts to bind the sachems, if we had but dreamed the speeches of Red Antlers would prove so strong."

"Yet you knew he was putting forth all his strength against me," returned Dean. "And all know he is one of the mightiest orators of the Iroquois."

"I know, I know!" The ancient squaw bobbed her head worriedly. "But to turn the thought of the Oneida against *you*, my nephew, was a thing no one could have foreseen."

"But you might have made one attempt, at least, to overcome him," muttered Dean, "before it was too late."

"Even yet it is not too late," Molly Deerskin answered soothingly. "I come here seeking a warrior to bear our belt to the council fire."

She looked toward Spread-the-Dew, who folded his arms and turned from her. Dean suddenly groaned aloud.

"Eh, and have I not one friend left among the Oneida? Where are these who called me brother?"

Spread-the-Dew's shoulder twitched spasmodically, but he remained silent under the reproach. Molly gazed at him with wonder, while she addressed her words to Dean.

"All the chieftains, your friends and your enemies, are gathered about the fire. All the warriors and young hunters stand behind them listening. We can find no one to carry our belt." She crept stealthily around Spread-the-Dew to peer up into his face. "Is there no one here who will bear our words for us?"

Spread-the-Dew lowered his head and answered with unconcealed emotion.

"My aunt, not a brand's burning since Red Antlers had me put from the council fire for too strong speaking on behalf of my brother. The sachems will listen to the Flying Heads tonight, rather than to Joseph Spread-the-Dew."

She squatted to the floor at his feet, her withered face suddenly puckered with anxiety.

"That is bad—that is bad," she mumbled.

"It is hopeless," said Dean quietly, not looking up.

"No—not yet," the old woman denied, not so long as the brands are still ablaze."

She heaved herself to her feet, and hobbled to the door. On the sill she turned to look back.

"Do not grow pale hearted, my nephew," she bade Dean. "A path shall still be cleared for you to walk in."

The door closed behind her, and Dean gazed on it with a sudden flickering of hope.

"They are cunning, these women," he murmured. "Even yet, it may be, they will contrive some device—"

His words were interrupted by a distant echoing whoop that cut his breath in two.

"It is too late!" ejaculated Spread-the-Dew. "The fire is raked up."

"Your words are true," said Dean composedly. "That is the death yell." And he drew himself up, Indian-like, impassive.

Spread-the-Dew turned to him pleadingly once more.

"It is too late to look for help from the women, but not to take the trail, my brother."

"No," said Dean, "that way is closed to me . . . The sachems must not find you here, but I have another word to say before you go."

HE WENT to a handsome walnut secretary that stood aloof in the shadows behind the settle. Obviously with great labor it had been brought from the seaboard, where master craftsmen made such things. It hinted, with the officer's gilt sword hanging above the chimney breast, of days when Dean had borne a military title, and moved in a society far different from the wilderness aristo-republic with which he now was struggling. From an inner drawer, with its own special lock, he drew a broad belt of wampum. This he examined narrowly before handing it to Spread-the-Dew.

"Look, my brother, at this belt with which the sachems gave this hunting ground in the Oneida lands to me and my sons forever."

The Iroquois ran the band slowly through his fingers, reading the ideographs that were worked in purple shells upon the white. Coming to the end, he handed it back to the owner, who locked it again into its hiding place.

"Look," he said, "I put it here by itself, and give the key to my brother in the clan of the Owl, Joseph Spread-the-Dew. If ever the fields come into dispute, he will show the belt to the sachems to make all clear in their minds again."

He passed the key to Spread-the-Dew, who stowed it away in his medicine pouch. The death yell sounded again as he did so, nearer and clearer than before. Dean extended his hand to the Iroquois.

"Brother," he said sorrowfully, "in the days of our adolescence, we drank of each other's blood and swore the oath of brotherhood. That bond is about to be broken in the only way it can. When I have crossed the skies, look on my sons with the same eyes with which you have ever regarded me. Stand by them against the enemy, as you have stood by my side."

"I will keep them under my arms," promised Spread-the-Dew gravely, "until they are big enough to run alone, or until my own sun sets behind the forest. And as Red Antlers is the cause of my brother's death, I will surely take his scalp, so that my brother's spirit may rest in peace beyond the stars."

"Joseph!" cried Dean, aghast by the vista that these last words spread before him.

It was more horrible than any he had yet faced, for it meant that not only his life, but his life's dream for his adopted people, would die with him. He had hoped to lead the Oneida gently, guilefully, from their hunting and fishing to the following of agriculture, foreseeing that in this way alone, they, trusted and generously provided for by the government, might still remain a wealthy and important community, which, as one of the Five Nations, they had always been. It was for this that he had returned to the wilderness after the Revolution, instead of settling down to a life of quiet and profitable farming among Mary's kinfolk in New England, or accepting a grant of far larger acreage in the rich new lands along the Ohio, that Congress had offered him as an officer in the late Continental Armies.

But if Spread-the-Dew's promise were fulfilled—and undoubtedly it would be—the prospect instead of one of enlarging fields, would be that of bitter and bloody feud. For Red Antlers, in his turn, would not go unavenged; and Mary, with the lads, would be left without a protector in a land given over to civil war. A groan was wrenched from Dean, which Spread-the-Dew naturally misinterpreted. In the Iroquois' own eyes, he was but promising what he justly owed to the brother whose blood he had drunk when they entered manhood together.

Again the death yell sounded, now not a hundred yards away.

"They come," said Spread-the-Dew. "I will go. Your words shall live with me. Farewell, my brother."

"Farewell," returned Dean, and added in English, "God bless you, Joseph!"

They gripped hands convulsively, each face an impassive mask. Then Spread-the-Dew slipped through the doorway, leaving the door an inch or two ajar. Dean sank on to the settle, his head in

hands, his shoulders shuddering. The death yell shrilled from the edge of the clearing about the cabin, the inner door flew open, and Mary appeared on the threshold.

"James—?" she gasped in terror.

He sprang to his feet.

"Go back!" he ordered sharply, and she obeyed.

He turned to face the outer door. It swung slowly to let three men, in the belts and quill embroidered leggings of the sachems, advance slowly into the firelit room. Dean, a strained composure like a shredding blanket about him, saluted them with an upflung hand, to which they responded with deep throated "Hows!"

"How, you sachems!" he answered. "Why do you come to the cabin of your nephew with a death yell? It astonishes him greatly that you should do this."

BELT EXTENDED, as senior sachem, replied in the thin, flat treble of a very old man. He was a little, shrunken, withered figure, with eyes like burned currants, over which the bat's wing thin lids drooped wearily. On his upper arm was tattooed the clan mark of the Bear, which could be seen when the blanket that he tried to keep huddled about him escaped from his failing grasp.

"We come to bring evil tidings to Breaking-of-the-Twigs." (Dean noted the significant use of his Oneida name, instead of the more customary address of "my nephew".) "Therefore we sent our voice before us, to warn him of our intent."

"Evil tidings are best told quickly," said Dean, suddenly tired of the protracted struggle, and now anxious to bring it to the inevitable end. "What are these my uncles bring?"

But the sachems were not to be hurried one iota over their traditionally oblique course.

"That before the last moon waned," replied Belt Extended, "old Stag-at-the-Brink was found at the end of a bloody trail with a white man's knife in his throat."

"These tidings are indeed evil, my uncle," said Dean gravely, "but they are not new. All the Oneida know of the murder."

"We come to ask you, James Breaking-of-the-Twigs, the name of the murderer."

It was Red Antlers who spoke now, and Dean pivoted to face his enemy. He was a man young enough to be a warrior still, although he wore the trappings of a sachem. A short, stocky, powerful figure, with a pair of antlers strapped to his head. These signified, not his name, but that he had been speaking in council. "To put on the horns" meant to make an oration. He, like the others, was painted for council, with no black in the pattern, that pigment being reserved for the warpath. Unlike them, he carried no blanket, and was heavily armed, a tomahawk beside the knife in his belt, and a warclub in his hand. On his chest gleamed the sign of the Deer, the tattooing brightened with vermilion.

Dean stared at him steadily as he answered.

"Then ask of Toad Jump. He found the body before the sachem's blood had cooled. There are six hunters who told you I was with them in Albany at that hour."

"Toad Jump, the child of the Great Spirit*, disappeared that same night," said Two Feathers, the third sachem, a tall, stern Iroquois of late middle age, who bore the mark of the Heron. He was noted for his pride, his justice, and his integrity. Before this evening, Dean would have counted him as a friend. "When the council sent to question him the following day, they were told he was far on the trail to visit his friends in Canada."

"The knife that was found," continued Red Antlers, "had a blade of fine steel and a polished bone handle, such as the British make. You are known to have taken that knife from the belt of a British ranger on the field of Oriskany. On the

* A courteous Indian way of referring to an idiot or half-wit.

handle you carved three grooves, one for each Mohawk that you killed before you, yourself, were wounded."

"Also, you, Red Antlers," said Dean quickly. "It is as well known that that knife was stolen from my cabin four moons since. For I put a high value upon it, and offered pelts of mink and beaver to the man who would restore it to me."

"The knife has not been seen since that day," said Two Feathers. "It is thought that Toad Jump carried it into Canada with him."

Dean could have cursed with vexation. They had not retained even their own evidence against him. But he held his tongue, maintained his calm, and waited for them to take the next step. Belt Extended would not be the one to take it. He seemed oblivious to what was going forward. Having done his duty by initiating the proceedings, he now stood blinking painfully at the fire, looking as if at any moment he might crumple into his blanket and surrender to the sleep that for twenty-four hours had been denied him.

"A life has been taken," said Red Antlers at last. "It must be redeemed by another."

Dean dropped his eyes.

"It is the custom," he admitted.

"It is a just custom," challenged Red Antlers.

"It is the custom," repeated Dean noncommittally.

"Stag-at-the-Brink was a great hunter and warrior in his youth," said Two Feathers. "He was a mighty chieftain in his prime. He was a wise councilor, when he became a sachem. Great is his loss to Oneida. The life of no common white man will fill the place of his."

Dean raised his head in sudden hope. Modestly, he considered himself as but a very common white man. But Red Antlers rounded on him with disheartening encomiums.

"You are a mighty warrior and a chieftain. During the Boston war many men followed you into battle. You sat in the councils of the great white sachems at Albany. With three tongues you speak to the Canadians, the Boston men, or the Iroquois, and all comprehend your words. You read the paper treaties as easily as the belts of war and peace. You are no common white man. You are the equal in strength and courage and cunning of old Stag-at-the-Brink. We come to demand your life in place of his."

"Ah-h!"

It was out at last—the death sentence. It spurred Dean to a new struggle. After the manner of a warrior addressing a full council, he began to pace back and forth, the Oneida rolling sonorously from his tongue.

"You sachems, that is not possible, according to the ancient customs of our people. You say that I am a white man. It is true that my skin is of that color. But when ten winters had passed behind me, my white parents sent me to be nurtured in the Long House. Eusenia, the good squaw of Belt Extended, soon adopted me in place of her own son, who was killed in a war against the Wyandots. By this belt—" he paused by the fireplace to unhook a thin strand of white wampum from the pummel of the officer's sword— "I was received into the tribe and made an Oneida. By this brand—" he tore open his hunting shirt to show the Owl on his chest— "I was initiated into the clan of the Owl. The life of an Owl of the Oneida cannot satisfy the loss of Stag-at-the-Brink, who was an Owl of the Oneida also."

HE LOOKED steadily at Red Antlers, who knew the laws and the customs as well as himself. And Red Antlers looked as steadily at Dean, while he made his reply.

"Your words say you are an Oneida. Your life shows you are a white man. It was not always so. Once you lived in a lodge, and relished the meal my sister boiled. Once you joined in the dances of the False Faces, the feasts of the White Dog and the Green Corn. But now you

sit by yourself in this great cabin, while a white woman cooks bacon and black coffee for your altered taste."

"And that," returned Dean with some heat, "is because your sister left me to follow Ten Branches, a hunter of the Onondaga. I was scouting for General Schuyler then, and had no time to hunt for a woman. But Ten Branches could run down the deer and wait all day by the bait for a turkey, as, at that time, the Onondaga were at peace, and he—" his lip curled scornfully—" never followed the warpath, even when his tribe took up the hatchet."

Red Antlers' paint concealed his expression, but the warclub on which he leaned suddenly quivered. Yet his tones were calm as he continued.

"But when the trails were cleared of blood, and the Oneida had granted you these lands within their own reserve, you did not send to Ten Branches to demand my sister of him. You brought a white woman from Albany to share your cabin. Why did you do this? Were you disgusted by the dark skin of my sister? Were you ashamed to have yellow sons instead of white ones?"

"All this is beside the trail," said Dean impatiently. "When I let your sister go to a more fortunate hunter than myself, I but followed the custom, which does not permit an Iroquois to restrain a squaw if she wishes to leave him. When I chose another woman to share my cabin, I still followed the custom, which does not compel a hunter to maintain a squaw after she has left his lodge."

"Ten Branches has gone into Canada," said Red Antlers, watching Dean narrowly, "with others of the Onondaga. My sister wishes to return to her own people. Is there a place for her at your hearth?"

Dean glanced swiftly at the bedroom door. He knew the answer to that question.

"There is room for but one woman in my cabin."

"Then," said Red Antlers smoothly, "let that one be an Oneida, so that we may see your yellow sons and know you for a brother."

"I may not put the woman I brought from Albany from out my door as long as we both shall live," replied Dean curtly.

Quick triumph lifted the Iroquois' chin.

"It is a custom of the white men to thus maintain always but one squaw. Among the Iroquois it is otherwise. In this you show the secret whiteness of your heart!"

There was an ugly double meaning in the last sentence—"white hearted" being used for "cowardly", as well as simply "afraid"—but Dean chose to ignore it. He turned from Red Antlers to speak with controlled passion to the other two.

"Listen, you sachems, against all ties and traditions you have spoken for my death. I have lived among you. I have served you faithfully. I have spoken for you to the white fathers in Albany and Philadelphia, explaining without mistake the belts you sent them, carrying their speeches truly back to you. But you have raised the death yell against me. So be it. What is to be the manner of my passing? The fire?"

"No," answered Two Feathers, "the club."

"Good!" said Dean, with genuine satisfaction. "You have spoken. Now listen to your nephew's words. Let me die, if you will, but not to avenge old Stag-at-the-Brink. You were moved to that decision by the speeches of Red Antlers. Once he was my friend. Now he is my enemy. Do not cause me to run the gantlet, but give a club to him and another to me, and let us fight our private quarrel out until one of us has gone over the White Trail."

"It is so," said Red Antlers contemptuously, "that the white men settle their disputes, with long knives or short guns and a third warrior to tell them when to begin. This is not a custom of the Iroquois."

Dean turned on him insolently.

"Red Antlers is pale hearted?"

But the sachem was not to be drawn from a secure position by so baseless a taunt.

"The British will tell you that my heart is as red as their coats," he replied with proud tranquility, "or the trails where I have met them."

Dean relinquished this vain line of attack. Turning his back on his enemy, he addressed the other two, more particularly Two Feathers.

"Listen, you sachems, have you given due consideration to what will come of this? I have a blood brother, who has already sworn to avenge my death—"

Red Antlers vented a short bark of scornful laughter.

"And," Dean went on, "when he has done so, some one of the Deer clan will take a scalp from the Owl to cover Red Antlers' grave. Then an Owl in turn will kill that killer. For ten tens of moons the trails will run red, until warriors' scalps are more plentiful than warriors among the Oneida. Is it your desire, you sachems, to begin this war between the clans? Do you wish to see the Oneida, this great Nation, melt as the snow melts under the southeast wind, as the peoples to the eastward have melted? As the Eries melted and disappeared under our warclubs? Is this your intention, my uncles?"

"This is not our intention," answered Red Antlers, with a strange, stern sorrow. "Yet if this awaits us at the end of the trial, we shall not step aside nor take another. The great days of the Iroquois are past. The Nations are scattered, and the Bond within the Band is broken. It is better for us to go as the Eries went, than to linger on without our brothers in the League of Peace."

" 'The Tree is dead and flung into a deep pit,' " mourned Two Feathers, in the words of the ancient ritual. "Sickness and drunkenness live in our lodges, and the death song is heard where the False Faces danced. Nothing is left to us but to squat in the Long Houses, till we grow fat and dirty as a Pawnee slave or the pigs in a white man's pen. These things are worse than war and death to the Iroquois."

Such fatalism was unanswerable.

Dean swung to Belt Extended, pleading desperately at last.

"My uncle, why has your mind turned from me? Why do the speeches of Red Antlers pierce your ears that are deaf to mine? When I came to the Long House, your squaw took me into your lodge. When I was adolescent, your hand led me to the hut to dream my dream. When I cried out at Oriskany, your arm carried me from the battle. When I was dissatisfied with the lands the Government offered me, it was your voice that invited me to come back to live among my dark brethren. Have I behaved ungratefully to you? Why are you offended with me?"

SLOWLY Belt Extended lifted his wrinkled lids, and the words that fell from his tongue were slow with fatigue.

"My nephew, you have opened your mind. We have heard your voice. Your speeches are far from being contemptible. But the day is spent. We are weary from long sitting in council. All has been debated there. A decision has been reached. It may not be altered. We have come for you."

Dean sank hopelessly onto the settle, his head bowed into his hands.

" 'Lord,' " he groaned in his mother tongue, " 'into Thy hand I commit my spirit!' "

There was a heavy silence. Red Antlers stood grimly smiling down on his enemy, while his eager hand fingered the handle of his warclub. Two Feathers stared solemnly into the dying fire, while Belt Extended relapsed into a semi-coma. Suddenly Dean's head rose, and he looked past the sachem's to the open door.

"Eusenia!" he cried, and jumped to his feet, trembling with nervous excitement.

The sachems whirled to face a tiny, withered old squaw, who, wrapped from head to heel in a closely wound blanket, had halted just left of the doorway. She stood in silence, with downcast eyes, while the expression on the painted faces changed from amazement to wrath and

outraged dignity. Even Belt Extended was thoroughly aroused.

"What foolishness is this?" he barked furiously. "Why are you here, you old woman?"

Before she could answer there was a shuffling of feet outside, and Molly Deerskin entered to take her place beside her sister, albeit with a deprecating glance at Two Feathers, who had been her husband for many years. After her came a third old woman, who crept timorously through the doorway and to the farther side of Eusenia. This was Birchbark Cup, the sister of the other two, and the wife of Red Antlers' maternal uncle.

For a moment Belt Extended hesitated, blinking at them owlishly. Then, making up his mind, he addressed them with becoming severity.

"Listen, you old women, in your age and foolishness, you did not know that the council fire had been raked up, and that now the brands are black. You hear my voice. You know it now. Begone to your lodges, and leave the sachems to make an end of the business that they are about."

He paused in confident expectation, but the women did not budge. Uneasily he glanced at his confreres, who returned the look in the same manner. They were completely nonplused by such conduct in those who were assuredly old enough to know better. Dean, as bewildered as themselves, had sunk back on the settle, rigid with self-control. He was content to leave all things to his foster mother's devices. She had been slow in coming, but always had she been sure.

Suddenly, without lifting an eyelash or shifting a fold of the enveloping blanket, she began to speak in a high, cracked, old woman's voice, the words coming in gasps, as if driven from her by an effort.

"Brothers and sachems of the Oneida, we, the women of the tribe, surround and hang about you like little children, who —who cry at their parents going from them, for fear of their never returning to —to give them meat. We—we earnestly beg you will give an ear—to our request."

She paused for lack of breath, dazed by her own audacity. Molly Deerskin resolutely took up the address.

"My brothers, we ask that you take the same notice of our speech that all the Iroquois do, who, when they are addressed by women, and are desired to cease from any rash action, immediately give way to our words."

"And that," added Birchbark Cup, "even though before every one else had tried to dissuade them, and could not prevail."

"And now," continued Eusenia, "we have presumed to come before you and pray that you leave this white man in peace. He is a good man. He is a strong friend to the Oneida. He is my son. Why should he be killed?"

And they all three stood, statue-silent, under the blackening brows of the sachems.

"You squaws," began Belt Extended, "in coming to us you break through all the ancient customs of our people. Never has a woman been known directly to address a sachem when he was wearing the leggings and horns."

"Are warriors to be hampered by the weak arms of squaws?" demanded Two Feathers. "Are sachems to be distracted by the chatter of old women?"

"If you had wished a voice in this matter," added Red Antlers in a tone of relief, "you should have sent a belt to the council, by your uncle or brother, according to the tradition."

"Then," said Two Feathers, and there was a regret in his voice, "your words would have been heard with respect. Your wishes would have been given consideration."

"Indeed," mumbled Belt Extended troubledly, "the decision of the council might have been different—if you had gone about this in a proper way."

"But we—we did not think," murmured Birchbark Cup mournfully, "that it was possible for the council to come to this decision."

Again came Red Antlers' barking laughter.

"Or you, Belt Extended," went on Molly Deerskin, "or you, Two Feathers, would have borne a belt on our behalf."

"This we would have been glad to do," said Two Feathers, "but, by reason of your neglect, it is now too late."

"Ugh!" Red Antlers suddenly grunted in ghastly exultation. "In spite of your speeches we will cover the grave of Stag-at-the-Brink with your white son's scalp, and you squaws shall be beaten blue and green to teach you due respect for the customs!"

"For your coming here has greatly astonished us," said Belt Extended severely. "Astonished and troubled us. Go back to your lodges. Mend the fires and boil the meal against our return. Leave the decisions of the council to be carried out by the sachems. Go!"

He stamped his foot and pointed to the door, but he was not obeyed. Instead Molly and Birchbark Cup each shuffled a foot or two forward, while between and behind them Eusenia dropped her blanket to the floor. In her hand was a naked knife, the point pressed against her breast.

"Listen, you sachems," she ordered, her voice suddenly grown steady. "I have come to tell you that if one hair of my foster son's scalp is lifted, if one finger of his hand is bruised, this blade shall find its lodge in my heart. That is my determination."

OBVIOUSLY it was. No one could doubt it. The sachems were checked, two with embarrassment, one with blackening wrath. Molly crooned softly:

"She is the sister, the aunt, of many chieftains and sachems and great ones among the Iroquois. Her grave will need many scalps to cover it."

"How will you answer her brothers," Birchbark Cup drove the point home, "when they come to ask you what has been done with her? What price will be demanded for the life of a 'mother of the tribe'?"

"Look at the knife in her hand," went on Molly. "It has a handle of polished bone, made by the British. It has three notches cut in bone, each one to signify the death of a Mohawk."

Only Red Antlers' eyes flickered, but the barely perceptible movement was as eloquent as the start he had suppressed.

"We found it in the lodge of my nephew, Red Antlers," said Birchbark Cup reluctantly, "where Toad Jump had replaced it, after he had killed Stag-at-the-Brink."

"For Toad Jump had been told by—some person—" Molly's eyes just wavered past the junior sachem— "that he would receive great honor among the Oneida if he should kill so great a sachem as that one."

"How do three old women know these things?" barked Red Antlers angrily. "Who will vouch for your words?"

"Toad Jump will vouch for them," answered Molly. "Tonight, after the sun had set, he came to my sister's lodge to ask for venison, and to demand why the promised honors had not been paid him, neither here nor in Canada."

"He showed us where the knife was hidden—where he had first been shown it, and where he returned it again," said Birchbark Cup. "And—and this we would not have spoken of, if—if the decision of the council had been different."

Red Antlers took one hasty stride toward the door, then halted with upraised chin and folded arms, as he gave Belt Extended time for his slow consideration. The latter stood staring absently into space, while the beads formed and dripped from Dean's forehead.

He perceived the whole of Red Antler's plot against himself, and the reason why it had miscarried. The aged, feeble, no longer useful sachem was to have been found with Dean's knife in his corpse on some day when the white man had been hunting alone in the forest, and therefore could not prove himself innocent if accused of the crime.

The knife had been duly stolen and, with Indian patience, Red Antlers had awaited his opportunity, only to mistake

it. For when, rifle in hand, Dean had started alone for Albany the fatal morning, Red Antlers had not guessed that he expected to join Spread-the-Dew, and his party of hunters, far down the trail. This had protected Dean with an irrefutable alibi; but, even so, Red Antlers had not been wholly disconcerted. Cunningly pleading the ancient tribal law of vicarious vengeance, a life—any life—for a life, he had succeeded in substituting Dean for an alleged white murderer.

Since the last was proved not to be a white man, the case against Dean had melted as the snow in April, and no other could be raised in its stead. For if Red Antlers had not personally struck the fatal blow, the Iroquois were unlikely to hold him accountable. Yet Dean could foresee that Red Antlers would presently find it convenient to join his sister and the Onondaga in Canada.

Nor could Toad Jump, even though actually so, be held guilty. Idiocy and insanity were compassionately treated by all the Eastern Indians, who considered those so afflicted to be especially beloved of God. Toad Jump would be watched to prevent further mischance, but he would not be punished, nor even reproached.

A sigh of relief grew in Dean's throat but he dared not release it yet. There was still the verdict of the council to be overcome. The whole affair had been conducted with such an obstinate unreason that he could not see the end of it even now. At last Belt Extended turned with dignity to his confreres.

"Brothers," he said sedately, "what these women do is lawless and without sense. But what they say is heavy with wisdom. It is no more than what I wished, myself, before I surrendered my judgment to Red Antlers' speeches. Brothers, I believe the Great Spirit has moved these women to behave in this unheard of and resolute manner. I believe that by this He shows He wishes us to change our decision in regard to our nephew, James Breaking-of-the-Twigs."

"Your words are wise, you Belt Extended," rejoined Two Feathers with quick, grave courtesy. "I agree with your words."

Red Antlers leaped between them with an inarticulate "How!", but Belt Extended forestalled him swiftly.

"Then let us return to our lodges to sleep upon this thought. Tomorrow we will make up the council fire, and report to the chieftains and sachems what we have heard tonight. And now Red Antlers shall make the trail for us."

Red Antlers drew his breath deeply, but again the intended oration was cut short.

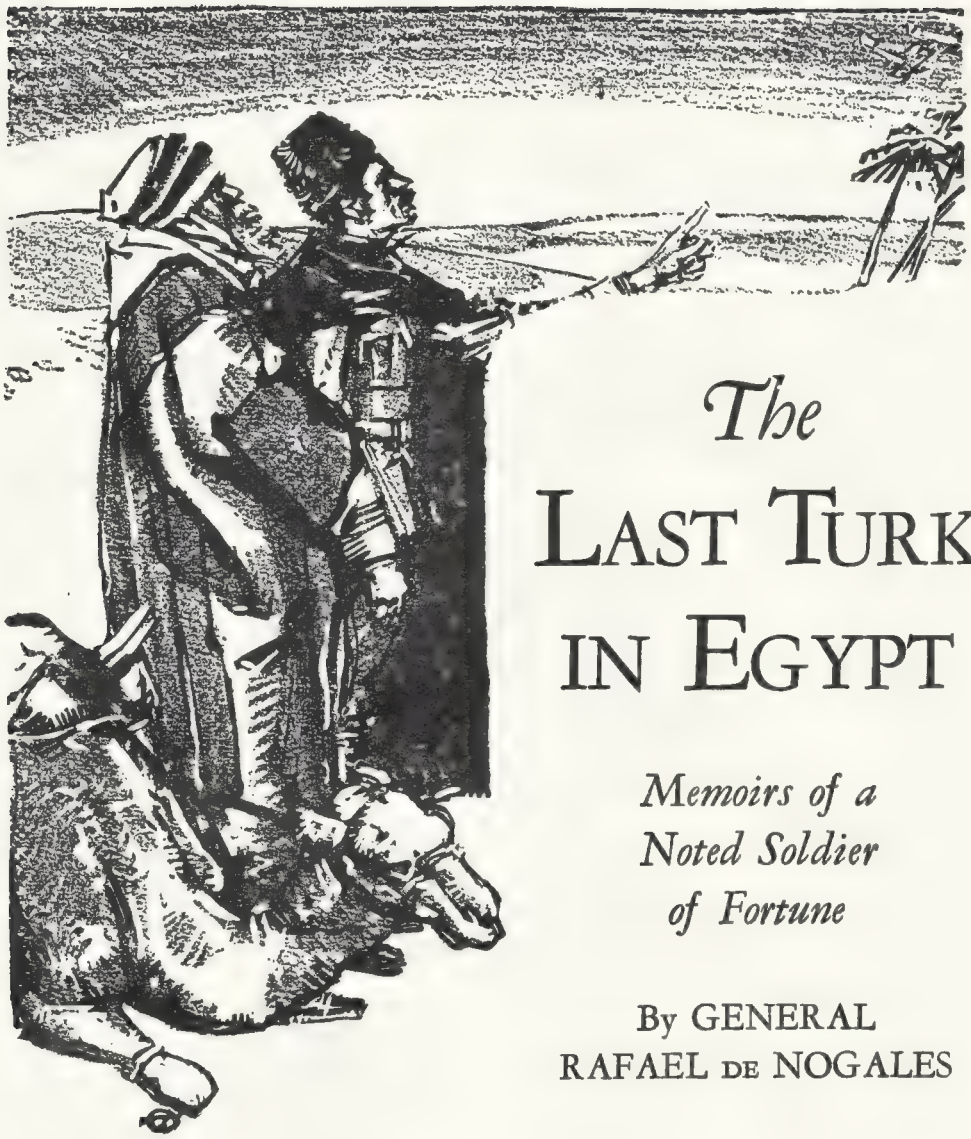
"You, Red Antlers," said Two Feathers sternly, "you hear the words of the elder sachem. Without words of your own go before us to the Long House. Tomorrow, around the council fire, we will listen to you, but not before."

Red Antlers glared from one to the other of his coadjutors, but both were as dourly determined as Eusenia, herself. With a gulp of rage, and not even a glance at his intended victim, he strode out of the door into the now moonlit night. After him tottered Belt Extended, Two Feathers towering over him in the rear. The two old women slipped out noiselessly, leaving Eusenia still motionless in the spot she had taken, when first she entered. Slowly her hand opened, and the knife clanged to the floor. Dean stumbled toward her, laughing hysterically. He dropped to his knees, wound his arms around her waist, and buried his face in her bosom.

"Oh, mother, mother!" he cried. "Mother! Mother!"

She bent above him, patting and smoothing his hair with her knotted fingers.

"There, there, little son, little rabbit," she crooned. "Do not weep, my partridge chick."



The LAST TURK IN EGYPT

Memoirs of a Noted Soldier of Fortune

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

"BEY, headquarters are calling you on the telephone," remarked Tasim, my faithful *nefer*, while he stood at attention in front of my field bed in our spacious home at Bir-es-Sabah. "You were right," he went on, "when you warned the colonel—"

"Make it snappy, oldtimer," I growled in disgust, and slipped into my riding breeches in record time.

"You see," drawled on Tasim, seemingly undisturbed, "the armored train which we sent to El-Khafir was ambushed last night near Tel-Abiad and had to fight its way back. Three of the crew got killed, seven wounded, and two machine guns were disabled."

So, then, it had happened after all, I thought to myself as I jumped on my Circassian pony and raced toward the residence of Colonel Essad Bey, commander of the garrison of Bir-es-Sabah

and the left wing of our expeditionary army in Egypt.

I found the colonel, or rather, Prince Essad Bey (for Essad was a member of the royal family of Albania) busy listening to Lieutenant Ibrahim Effendi, the officer in charge of our armored train. Ibrahim was a native of Smyrna and one of our ablest officers on the Egyptian border. He insisted that the Arab tribesmen who had ambushed him were led by "*Inglis*" officers belonging to a regiment of Australian cavalry which, according to one of our flyers, had blown up our artesian wells near Bir-Biren the day before.

This unexpected and extremely unwelcome activity on the part of our foes convinced Essad Bey that I was right when I warned him after our victorious Second Battle of Gaza that our entrenched camp of Bir-es-Sabah was our most vulnerable point on the Sinai Front because our field engineering department had forgotten, or omitted purposely, to fortify its southern sector; probably in the expectation that the enemy would not dare attack us by way of El-Khafir on account of the waterless stretch of desert which separated us in that direction from the British headquarters at El-Arrish. And, to make matters worse, while we were listening to Ibrahim's report one of our Arab scouts bowed himself into our presence with the disturbing news that a detachment of enemy camel riders had occupied El-Khafir at dawn.

I could not help feeling a little upset by all those mishaps, because I was acting then as Essad Bey's right hand man. Consequently I flew immediately to our headquarters at Tel-es-Sheriat to report what had happened to Colonel von Kress Bey, the commander-in-chief of our expeditionary army.

I got there not a minute too soon for, simultaneously with the Britishers' raid on El-Khafir, the bulk of the Allied cavalry had made its appearance near Djemameh, east of Gaza, for the purpose, apparently, of forcing a Third Battle of Gaza on us. Such a combat had to be avoided at any price, because our horses were in extremely bad shape, worn out by six months of continuous campaigning. They were not in condition to withstand the attack of the splendidly equipped enemy cavalry which outnumbered ours five to one.

If we could only prevent a general advance of the enemy for a fortnight or so, until the hot season set in, everything would be all right. During the months of June, July, August and September "real" fighting in the desert was out of the question. But the question was how to prevent such an advance? Field Marshal Sir Edmund Allenby, the new commander-in-chief of the British forces in Egypt, was a brilliant soldier and an old "desert rat". He knew perfectly well that unless he managed to give us a good shake up before the hot season set in he would have to postpone the conquest of Jerusalem for another five months —for Jerusalem was his goal.

He seemed to realize that by threatening our weakest point, the unprotected southern sector of Bir-es-Sabah, he could force us to distract a considerable amount of our sorely reduced expeditionary forces toward our left wing while he, with the main body of his army, which was nearly twice as strong as ours, could leisurely proceed to break through our weakened right wing at Gaza, or through our center at Tel-es-Sheriat.

To checkmate Lord Allenby's clever move, and to try to retard the fall of Jerusalem for a few months at least, I was ordered to organize a flying column—preferably a camel corps—and to lead it into the heart of the Sinai peninsula. The orders I received were to oust the enemy from El-Khafir, to destroy, if necessary, our abandoned railroad from Bir-es-Sabah to Kossaima so as to prevent the Britishers from using it during their projected advance on Bir-es-Sabah, and to harass their rear guard communications as much as possible for the purpose of drawing the bulk of their cavalry away from Djemameh. Thus we

might spoil Allenby's plan of trying to force a Third Battle of Gaza on us before the hot season set in.

On May 8, 1917, I was given at our headquarters of Tel-es-Sheriat the commission of *montaca-comandane*, or military governor, of Egyptian Sinai. And at nine o'clock of the night of May 10 I left Bir-es-Sabah for the south at the head of a flying column of *hedjin-suaris*, or cavalry mounted on camels, with its corresponding convoy of provisions and ammunition.

The majority of our men were Arab regulars, commanded by officers whom I had picked out from among the best of our desert veterans. The only Turk among these was Lieutenant Ibrahim Effendi, who was acting as my chief of staff. Our mounts were *hedjins*, or swift saddle dromedaries, capable of covering from eight to ten kilometers an hour day after day.

A strong contingent of irregulars, called the regiment of El-Arrish volunteers, accompanied us for scouting purposes. They were led by two trustworthy sheiks, Hassan-Erkienharb and Selim. The majority of these Bedouins were heads of clans and fervent Mohammedans who, rather than submit to the hated rule of the English *giaours*, had abandoned their homes and pasture-lands around El-Arrish in order to enlist beneath the crimson crescent of the *Khaliphat* and the emerald hued banners of the *Pegamber*.

I may as well add that during the three or four weeks that our expedition lasted I did not suffer a single case of desertion among our Arab volunteers; which goes to show that when treated right even the Bedouins are apt to become loyal soldiers, capable of dying without regret in the fulfilment of their military duties.

The aspect of our column was picturesque.

It was led at a distance of a quarter of a mile by a vanguard of Arab regulars, whose swarthy bearded faces were crowned by white *kefiehs*, and whose lithe, sinewy bodies, wrapped in fluttering *burnouses*, kept swaying back and forth on wise looking, long legged dromedaries.

From both sides of their high pummeled saddles dangled in profusion red colored tassels which contrasted with the opal-blue expanse of the desert sky and the saffron colored, dismal sand dunes.

This vanguard was preceded by a platoon of scouts, deployed in guerrilla formation at great intervals. Whereas the main body, which included our convoy, I myself led, surrounded by a group of picturesquely garbed Arab sheiks.

The rear guard was composed of a troop of regulars. These kept relieving regularly our patrols on both flanks of the caravan, which from afar resembled a flock of gulls winging their way leisurely into blue distance.

Neither the heat of the terrestrial furnace which we were traversing nor the pangs of thirst seemed to deter our little band of True Believers, as with eyes glued to the glaring, wavering horizon, they followed the uncertain routes of their forefathers, marked by the yellow bones of numberless dromedaries and an occasional human skeleton. And, strange though it may sound, those are still the only roads that lead across those sand wastes, where wild beasts howl by right and in the day time screaming flocks of vultures circle overhead.

Following an old custom of mine, we advanced only after dark. Daylight usually found us hiding in the bottom of some narrow cañon or a deep ravine, so as to throw off our track the ever watchful enemy flyers and the swarms of native spies who infested that forsaken wilderness—where we discerned occasionally, perhaps in the bottom of a hollow depression or grouped about a smear of dusty green, the black tents of forlorn Bedouin camps or a silent group of tawny ancient ruins; the remnants, probably, of a once populous commonwealth, or city, long since descended to the bats and the soft padded prowlers of the night. Such ruins seem to reflect the image of universal destiny, since, as an old saying goes, "Civilization is

like the light of the sun which shines to make more intense the darkness when it ceases!"

Northern Arabia, which we were invading, embraces the peninsula of Sinai with its somber, sun baked, rock strewn deserts across which Moses led the chosen people some four thousand years ago. And it was toward the heart of those gruesome wastelands, of which I had just been appointed the last Turkish military governor, that we advanced nightly, like a column of phantoms, in order to plant the banner of the crimson crescent on the summits of Jebel-Magarah, whose black towering bulks were outlined on the horizon, blossoming with white and golden clouds.

AFTER cautiously traversing the danger zone, which extended south of Bir-es-Sabah, we reached about midnight a well called Bir-Turkieh, where we halted until our convoy caught up with us. And thence we continued advancing slowly, in close formation, in the direction of El-Asludj, where we intended to spend the following day.

An hour or so after our departure we ran into one of our scouting parties which confirmed the report that El-Khafir had been captured by a troop of enemy irregulars and that a column of Australian cavalry, composed of six hundred men, had blown up most of our artesian wells in the neighborhood of Bir-Biren. In short, our prospective bases of operation had disappeared, so far, at least, as their doing us any good was concerned.

Before sunrise we arrived at the hamlet of El-Asludj, which we found in ruins. Some distance away loomed through the dim light of the awakening day the shadowy outlines of a rubblework bridge, five or six spans in length, over which passed the tracks of our Bir-es-Sabah-Kossaima railroad. Sunrise found us camping in the bottom of a deep ravine past which led the tracks of one of the numerous enemy scouting parties which used to scour those regions almost every day.

On both sides of our hiding place rose sheer, beetling rocks so lofty that, though far above us shone a blue ribbon of sky, around us there was hardly sufficient light for us to move about safely. Hidden away in that uncanny den and without daring to light campfires for fear of revealing our presence to the enemy, we awaited the arrival of several friendly sheiks. The sheiks praised Allah for having sent us, and then informed us of the movements of the enemy right wing in whose radius of action we still found ourselves. Following their advice, I left with them a detachment of irregulars to help defend the Asludj defile and the bridge in case the Britishers attempted to cut our retreat in that direction.

At nightfall, when we were getting ready to resume our march, the noncom in command of another scouting party reported that the vicinity of El-Ruhebe (or Rohobat of the Old Testament) was infested with enemy camel riders who had forced him to retreat on the double quick; also that he had noticed in that vicinity the tracks of numerous armored cars. All of which went to prove that the Britishers were seriously preparing to attack Bir-es-Sabah on its most vulnerable point—its unprotected southern sector.

Alarmed by those reports, we redoubled our vigilance, and when day finally dawned we crossed the Egyptian frontier at a point north of El-Khafir, where we camped among a chaos of boulders, at the foot of a bleak, low hill from whose summit we could see distinctly the hazy outlines of the golden dunes and the blue shadow of the Mediterranean Sea near El-Arrish.

Once in possession of that ideal lookout I ordered our provisions and ammunition to be stored away in the bottom of a nearby cañon because I intended to turn the surrounding country into our temporary base of operations.

After everybody had enjoyed a rest

I summoned our officers, to discuss with them our future plan of campaign. It could not have been simpler, since it merely consisted in holding ourselves at all risks in Egyptian territory and in sticking around the Sinai until we managed to force the enemy to send the bulk of its cavalry in pursuit of us. Having no other bases than rocks and çañons, I decided to employ our Latin-American tactics of guerilla warfare during that little campaign in the Holy Land.

And shortly before dark, when the first stars were shimmering in the evening sky, three gray enemy planes flew slowly over us, like three winged sharks.

On the eve of our departure, Colonel Essad Bey had promised to send me the rest of our provisions in an armored train which we were to await at nightfall of the fourteenth in the abandoned station of Tel-Abiad. However, since that night proved to be very dark, the crew of the train mistook us for the enemy when they saw our camel riders approaching. Instead of waiting for us, they pitched the provisions out along the track and set off at full speed, after having fired several volleys at us.

That amazing and extremely unfriendly farewell, which was actually funny, did not fail, nevertheless, to remind us that we were in Egyptian Sinai, therefore in a highly dangerous zone infested with Bedouin bandits who availed themselves of the pompous title of volunteers of his British Majesty to take possession of El-Khafir, Bir-Biren, Kossaima, Magdabah, and so forth, harassing the natives friendly to the Turks and committing all manner of depredations and crimes.

Well paid, well mounted and well informed by a system of espionage with agents among practically all the desert tribes, these dark gentry came and went everywhere preceded and directed by their chiefs, disguised as dervishes or itinerant merchants, who offered the Bedouins assistance with the purpose of having them on their own side and utilizing them later on, if possible, as auxiliary agents. My men, a few days later, captured the most dangerous of them on the road to Magdabah, where they knifed him along with a dozen of his followers.

As soon as the train withdrew, we gathered up what provisions we could and returned to our camp, which was distinguishable from the encircling desert only by the glitter of weapons and the white *kefiehs* of our sentries, posted among rocks and brambles.

After a couple of hours' rest, I took advantage of the moonlight struggling through a heap of silvery clouds to set forth to surprise the enemy irregulars who continued in possession of El-Khafir. I chose for that purpose a group of regulars and a platoon of scouts.

We could distinguish from afar the camp-fires of the British Bedouin volunteers glowing among the native shacks of El-Khafir's abandoned railroad station. They did not seem to suspect our proximity or our purpose of giving them a surprise party.

Gliding through the darkness like a band of wolves, we finally reached the plain in front of the *kasaba* and deployed. Unfortunately, as soon as our vanguard opened fire, that cowardly riff-raff of hirelings sounded "boot and saddle" and, without offering much resistance, stampeded in the direction of Magdabah; while I pondered whether to set fire to El-Khafir and make an end once and forever to that infernal nest of bandits and hostile *comitadchis* in the pay of his Majesty's government.

Immediately after I dispatched two sections of regulars under Lieutenant Ibrahim Effendi to finish dynamiting the wells of Bir-Biren and, keeping on to the south, to bring me dead or alive the subgovernor of Kossaima (situated west of the historical Ain-el-Kadi, or Kadesh-Barneah of the Old Testament) whom the government, for a thousand and one highly justifiable reasons, had declared to be a traitor to his country and the *Khaliphat*.

After their departure, I set off with the bulk of my men along the Jebel-Khelal trail, or the "Road of the Mountain of the

Moon," to try to get hold of another cutthroat by the name of Sheik Atien, a descendant of the Prophet and one of the most ferocious Bedouins of Sinai. And when, shortly before sunset, we were approaching the foot of historic Jebel-Khelal, from whose summit the Suez Canal may be discerned like a dark ribbon in the distance, we learned that bold Sheik Atien had preferred not to await our arrival but, decamping in all haste, had fled with his tribe into the heart of the desert.

However, from a couple of prisoners whom we captured after a spirited attack on the rear guard of the sheik, we learned that our coming had caused no little sensation and alarm in Sinai, and that enemy spies, deceived by our nocturnal comings and goings, had announced to the English the presence of not one but several Turkish columns, which, as I tallied the record, proved always to be the same—ours.

To deceive the enemy as to the number of our forces, was, naturally, one of the objects of our nightly rambles. Through these prisoners we heard also that a British High Commissioner at El-Arrish, by the name of Mr. Wilson, had a few days before summoned the sheiks and notables of the surrounding country to induce them to place themselves under the orders of Sheriff Hussein of Mecca.

Since all this information corresponded almost exactly with the facts, instead of ordering the two to be shot, as they really deserved it, I turned them loose; and, lest they should fear that I intended to apply to them the "law of flight", which was frequently used by the Turks, I turned them before my departure into my *mussafirs*, or sacred guests, by inviting them to partake of my frugal supper.

On our way back to camp we met in the desert several deputations from neighboring tribes, who came to kiss my hand in token of submission. Then, after a series of marches and counter-marches to mislead the enemy spies, we rested before dawn for awhile near one of the many natural cisterns, or hidden waterholes. Each of these wells has its owner who guards it like a treasure. He and his clan depend on it for the water necessary for their flocks of sheep, goats and camels during the eight or nine months of total drought usual to that wilderness. To wander thirsting through those flaming wastes is to learn whether one can count truly on one's friends in the desert. The ruthless military leader who abuses the kindness of those poor tribesmen by wasting the water, on which they depend entirely for the sustenance of their herds, runs the risk of perishing with all his men. Once he is known as an abuser of kindness he will hardly be able to find a dweller in the desert willing to show him the hidden waters of salvation.

DAYBREAK saw a picturesque scene form about the cistern. Arab shepherds, young and old, clothed in Biblical costume, and slender Rebeccas with glistening jars balanced on their shapely heads, came and went incessantly, making their way with gestures and shouts through the flocks of sheep and frisking goats which seemed to dispute with one another for the divine crystal. Those simple minded people apparently took no notice of us, doubtless because they already knew us by name and understood that we were friends of the poor.

In the desert everything is known. As among our Indians, tidings are communicated by day over great distances by means of signs, and at night, through the agency of fires; or by prolonged howls which are sometimes audible several miles away, the echoes resounding from height to height until they are finally lost like a dying sigh in the somber solitudes of the desert.

When, after criss-crossing for several days the interior of the peninsula, we finally reached our encampment, we found there the two sections of regulars which I had dispatched toward the south. Their commander, Ibrahim Effendi, reported that, upon their arrival in the neighborhood of Kossaima, the partisans of the Kaimakam—or sub-governor—had

come out to fight them off; and that, when they (my men) were going to apply the torch to that *kasaba* in order to make a clean job of it, a group of elders had presented themselves with a letter, addressed to me and signed by them, in which they reiterated their unshakable allegiance to his Majesty the Sultan and categorically disapproved the conduct of the Kaimakam and his followers. These, after their defeat, had fled into the El-Maghara mountain range.

An hour later, as the silvery disk of the moon was climbing the somber outline of the desert horizon, a gigantic white camel suddenly swung up to us. Mounted thereupon, unarmed, was that Sheik Atien whom we had hunted near Jebel-Khelal in order to stand him up against a wall. He leaped from his mount and, bowing profoundly, touching in rapid succession with his right hand first the ground, then his heart and lastly his forehead, he declared to me frankly that in view of the generosity with which I had treated his two followers, prisoners of ours, a few days previous, he considered it his duty to come and offer excuses for his past conduct.

Since he accompanied his request by the word *redya-ederim*, which, according to the Koran's precepts, entitled him to mercy, I not only pardoned him but pressed his hand cordially in the presence of everybody; thus assuring myself of a new friend and the support of one of the most powerful, though also most rascally, sheiks in Sinai.

The letter of the elders of Kossaima, which I forwarded at once by one of our flyers to Colonel von Kress Bey, at Tel-es-Sheriat, together with the unconditional submission of almost all the most important sheiks of that region, fulfilled the first part of my mission, which was to reestablish the authority of the Sublime Porte over that strategically most important province of Egypt.

Once free of that responsibility—for the main point in war is not always scrapping, but preparing the ground—I got busy taking the necessary steps for complying with the second and most important part in my trust: namely, to draw the bulk of the enemy cavalry toward the heart of Egyptian Sinai.

After the surrender of Sheik Atien, we spent some time scouring the desert, as far south as Mount Horeb of Bible story, to force the remaining recalcitrants to submit and to lend encouragement to the loyal sheiks.

And shortly after that, on the afternoon of May 21—for we were letting no grass grow under our feet—while we were resting in the depths of the Wadi-Ansarak, at the foot of Jebel-el-Kern, three enemy planes—the habitual ones—flew over us and toward El-Arrish. They passed at a low altitude and apparently caught sight of us since, flying back, they circled over our camp once or twice, and then, veering off anew toward El-Arrish, disappeared.

Their way of maneuvering made me suspect that they had located us, and that their reason for not bombing us must have been that it did not suit their plans for us to move from there. That thought went through my mind like a flash, making me realize that the psychological moment for action had arrived. Consequently I had "assembly" sounded and, after praising all, officers and men, for their splendid conduct, I told them that on the following day I intended to embark on a little adventure to which all who desired to distinguish themselves were heartily invited.

My announcement did not fail to produce great enthusiasm among my hard boiled lot of "desert rats", especially among our El-Arrish volunteers, who immediately staged one of their mock combats to celebrate the occasion. I took part in that tournament, mounted on my war dromedary; while from the neighboring sand dunes wild desert folks, with their piercing black eyes riveted on us kept howling their approval and praying to Allah fervently not to let our protective angels slip off our backs, or shoulders, rather, during our forthcoming offensive against the hated Inglis Christian dogs. *Orlar-Oulson!*

Since, as I said before, the enemy must

have known the exact location of our camp through their flyers, I authorized my men to light fires and cook the necessary provisions for our expedition of the morrow. These consisted of thin cakes of corn or barley, prepared without salt or lard, and roasted among the ashes and sand heated by the camp-fires.

The whole proceeding could not have been simpler or cheaper, since in lieu of wood they burned brambles or dry camel dung.

I may as well mention, as a matter of curiosity, that after water and barley—or wheat if they can procure it—perhaps the greatest of God's gift to the sons of Ishmael is undoubtedly sand, pure desert sand; it serves as a kitchen, and as a couch for the dromedaries which, unlike horses, can only sleep lying down. Nor is the Bedouin's abstinence the myth that some suppose. A couple of those *tortillas*, baked in the ashes of their camp-fires, which can not contain more than a quarter of a pound of flour, and three or four drafts of lukewarm water suffice to nourish and content him for twenty-four hours. If to this he adds half a dozen dates or olives, or perhaps a scrap of cheese or meat, he considers the repast not a meal, but a banquet. Sparing, almost ascetic in partaking of food, the Bedouins detest alcohol, though they smoke to excess.

Their pipes, made of a short cane stem fitted in a clay bowl—which they call *chibouk*—and a flint lighter are two articles from which they rarely separate themselves. The greatest pleasure that one can afford them is the present of a handful of tobacco or some coffee beans. The latter they drink without sugar, boiled until it acquires a taste as bitter as quinine.

After our supper I went with my adjutant to have a look at our encampment, whose numerous camp-fires were glowing all about us. In every direction close circles of ruminant dromedaries, stretched out upon the sand, were discernible in the dusk like waving rings of shade. Far above us, on the summit of Jebel-el-Kern, the somber silhouettes of our sentries detached themselves from the black-blue night sky scattered with jewels; while around our smoking camp-fires rosaries of glowing black diamonds, set within the bronzed countenances of my Saracens, blazed with the intense light of the desert wastelands.

Wherever we looked the red glare of the camp-fires glittered on the polished barrels of Mauser rifles. Silver daggers and the gilded hilts of curved scimitars seemed to dream of glory in their crimson and green velvet sheaths.

And seated among those wild sons of the desert, with the starry crescent bound upon his forehead, was a Venezuelan, whom life's strange tricks had turned into the representative of the *Khaliph* and the last standard bearer of the Ottoman Empire over the burning sands of Egyptian Sinai.

AT DAWN I summoned our officers and told them my intention of dynamiting the wells of Magdabah and the English military railroad near El-Arrish, some thirty miles away from our camp. I requested Ibrahim to take care of the Magdabah end of our expedition; a trust which he gladly accepted. Khalil, another of my faithful lieutenants, readily agreed to lead the party which was to blow up the tracks of the British railroad near the enemy headquarters at El-Arrish.

Out of the group of *askars* which Ibrahim chose the only one who fell alive into the hands of the enemy was Ali, our cook, who, swept along by the prevailing wave of enthusiasm, had insisted on accompanying Ibrahim Effendi.

We found some difficulty at first in getting together the group which Khalil Effendi was to command. It seemed as if the majority of our El-Arrish Volunteers had scores to settle with the British military authorities and feared, naturally, if taken prisoners, they would be ordered shot on the spot.

Fortunately, due probably to the shame which the indecision of his fellow volun-

teers caused him, a Bedouin lad from Sheik Zowaid, by the name of Selim, stepped forth and offered himself as the first to accompany Khalil. As a reward for his initiative and as an incentive to the rest I detached the iron crescent which I wore and fastened it on his breast, at the same time promoting him to the rank of corporal. That sufficed. The list was filled almost in record time. And, half an hour later we set out, all except our camp guard, headed for the unknown.

We watered our dromedaries at the well of Abu-Anguileh, and then advanced cautiously along the depths of Wadi-Ansarak, protected on both flanks by scouting parties deployed in guerrilla formation.

Fearing that the cloud of dust which we were raising might betray our presence to the enemy, we branched off to the right and, skirting the northern rim of the desert, which stretched out like a streak of gold in an easterly and westerly direction, we reached after several hours' tramp a depression called *sheitan-deresi*, or Satan's Gulch, wherein we decided to wait until sundown. It was then on the stroke of noon—the hour of the ghosts and goblins in the desert.

With my face swathed in my silken *kefieh*, to protect it from the scorching rays of the midday sun, I gazed out over those mournful solitudes, undulating toward the vague boundaries of dusty horizons, where I distinguished dimly the violet silhouettes of the dunes wavering through a ribbon of golden haze.

Except for a tiny green asp, perchance, which glided past noiselessly and then disappeared in the shadow of a fragrant desert shrub, or the dust rainbow which trembled triumphantly in the azure depths of the glowing firmament, death only seemed to spread its wings over those sallow scorching desert wastes. The gruesome silence was broken now and then by the hoarse voice of the simoon, or the distant growl of cannon, heralding that toward Septentrion another of our daily clashes with the enemy's vanguard was taking place around Bir-es-Sabah, Gaza or Tel-es-Sheriat.

When the afternoon began to change from rose to lilac, Ibrahim and his men jumped on their mounts and wound their way cautiously across the darkening desert in the direction of Magdabah; while Khalil, with his arms outstretched toward Mecca, the Holy of Holies of the Moslem world, implored the blessing of Allah. Strengthened by that act of faith, Khalil and his braves leaped to saddle and disappeared also into the distance, enveloped in a cloud of dust. As for myself, I quickened the pace of my remaining men and returned with them by the shortest route to Jebel-el-Kern, which lifted its brow above the eastern horizon amid a chaos of purple and crimson haze.

As I planned to cover the retreat of my two lieutenants from that height, if they were pursued, I had our sentries placed on its craggy ledges facing the desert, and our dromedaries lined up in the center of the bivouac, without removing their saddles, ready for any emergency.

The night was extremely dark, and but for the mournful howling of the jackals, the silence that surrounded us was interrupted only now and again by the sighing of the breeze among the brambles against the mountain side and the cadenced tread of our sentinels, who kept pacing patiently back and forth over the jutting buttresses of Jebel-el-Kern.

With our arms in readiness, and one foot in the stirrup, we kept our anxious gaze riveted on the western skyline, behind which the stars sank gradually, one by one, as the hours dragged out. Suddenly, about eleven o'clock, we sighted far away, toward Magdabah, an intense blue flare which lighted up the sky for several moments, and was followed by the distant thunder of two explosions, awakening echoes which kept rolling and rumbling over the pitch dark surface of the slumbering desert, like the savage roaring of a hungry lion. Ibrahim Effendi had fulfilled his mission. Magdabah was in flames.

Then, about two in the morning, there came two more detonations, from the direction of the coast, announcing that

Khalil also had done his duty. *Allah akbar, Allah kerim!*

I felt elated, because I realized that those two daring raids must set the English in motion, for Magdabah lay only a few miles away from their headquarters at El-Arrish; while the place where Khalil had just dynamited the British railroad must have been also very near that camp, to judge by the sound of the explosions.

I started reading with the aid of my electric torch a little novel called "The Iron Pirate", which one of my men had picked up in one of the abandoned enemy camps near El-Khafir. I was fully convinced that the diversion of the enemy cavalry toward the desert, which was what I had aimed to provoke by this expedition, would be an accomplished fact within twenty-four hours. I was not mistaken. Shortly before dawn, when I had closed my novel and put it back into my saddle-bags, preparatory to having a look at our outposts, the officer of the guard made his appearance, accompanied by the Bedouin—"Hamdi the Kid" as I called him because he was a mere lad of fourteen—and reported that the enemy were surrounding us from three sides, north, south and west.

After booking the officer's report, I mounted my Circassian pony and set out to ascertain the facts. The officer was right. When I reached the summit, our sentries pointed out to me several nearby hills occupied by pickets of enemy cavalry, dismounted and stretched out upon the ground, with their rifles leveled at us. Their officers were standing, with outstretched legs, eyeing us closely through their field glasses.

El-Hamd-Ul-Illah! Jerusalem was safe! The Britishers had thrown away their only chance of forcing a Third Battle of Gaza on us!

Our situation, which under ordinary circumstances would have been considered desperate, caused us in this particular case to raise our eyes toward heaven, to thank good old Allah for having stayed faithfully by us.

However, there was not a moment to lose. So I raced back to camp and dispatched the main body of our little force on the double along the bottom of Wadi-Ansarak, toward the east, the only direction still open, while I remained behind with a few picked men to cover their retreat and mislead the enemy if he gave us a chance to do so.

AS SOON as our rear guard had disappeared behind a bend of the cañon I ducked with my handful of followers through a nearby ravine until we reached the bare summit of a neighboring hill, from where we could make out perfectly a group of enemy scouts stretched forward, over their horses' necks, and observing, from a distance of a hundred yards at most, the bivouac which we had just abandoned.

A volley from us soon convinced them that the nest they were watching was empty; and without losing much time in cogitating over what had happened they turned about and galloped in our direction.

From a second hill which we crowned in due time I convinced myself that the commander of the British forces, which were pursuing us, was honoring me perhaps unduly. Those were no mere squadrons, but whole regiments of cavalry and mounted infantry formed in marching columns, which poured like hissing sidewinders out of the defiles of the neighboring hills and the dry gulches of the surrounding desert.

Forgetting momentarily the imminent danger which threatened us, and in spite of the fact that an endless column of New Zealanders was trying to cut off our retreat toward El-Khafir, I could do no less than pause for awhile to admire the magnificent display of forces and the energy with which the commander of the British cavalry had planned to give us the death blow.

Occupying and abandoning successively more or less advantageous positions, we went dashing along in retreat until we finally reached the ravine in which was hidden our convoy of provisions and am-

munition. This we mobilized at once. Then, firing to right and left, we continued our retreat in an easterly direction, toward Wadi-Musa, south of Bar-el-Lot, or the Dead Sea.

We crossed the spacious Wadi-Abiad near the ruins of Meshrife, whence a natural though unmarked trail led to Maan. I took advantage of that circumstance to get our convoy of wounded into safety.

After we had hurriedly entrenched ourselves among the crumbling ruins of Meshrife, trying to fight off as best we could that avalanche of cavalry which threatened to crush us under its sheer weight, a regiment of Australian Light Horse burst out on our right flank, ready for business.

If that unit had arrived five minutes earlier it could have cut off our retreat and destroyed us with its machine guns on the open plain.

When I judged that our convoy of wounded was well under way, I set out with my remaining men, not more than one hundred and fifty or two hundred all told, to save the Tel-Abiad railroad bridge, which was threatened by still another enemy column of imposing proportions. Unfortunately we arrived too late. A terrific explosion, which shook the ground for many miles around, announced to us mid-route that that viaduct had been blown up by a single charge.

That day the old saying, "Do not play with fire," was recalled to my mind in a most unceremonious way; for the diversion of the British cavalry toward the heart of Egyptian Sinai, which I had planned to provoke by means of this mad expedition of mine, forty or fifty miles behind the enemy front, had become a veritable deluge of horseshoes and dynamite that in less than twelve hours was to destroy the section of our Bir-es-Sabah-Kossaima railroad between El-Asludj and El-Khafir.

This force, which poured on us like brimstone and sulphur upon poor Gomorrah, was formed, as I heard later from Major Muhlmann, the chief of staff of our expeditionary army, by forty or forty-three squadrons; that is to say, by the main body of the enemy cavalry, composed of the Imperial Camel Corps, the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Divisions, two field squadrons (of engineers), and numerous demolition parties, accompanied by a section of armored cars, machine guns, and an enormous train of explosives, with the aid of which, in less than twelve hours, the enemy blew up the fifteen miles of railroad mentioned above, together with all its bridges and stations.

The reason why the Britishers destroyed our railroad was, as I heard afterward, because they believed that my flying column was the vanguard of our expeditionary army, which they feared was preparing to utilize this road in a new raid on the Suez Canal. In reality the immediate result of their action was to throw away their opportunity of establishing a military base at El-Khafir, from which, by means of this road, they could have advanced on Bir-es-Sabah and harassed it constantly from the south, which was its only vulnerable point.

The best proof of this is the fact that after six months of fruitless effort to take Bir-es-Sabah from the west, the English were finally compelled to change their tactics and to concentrate their offensive on Bir-es-Sabah from the south, capturing it by surprise—which they could have done half a year earlier if they had left that section of railroad intact, instead of destroying it, thus saving me the trouble of having to destroy it myself.

It is needless to remark on the continuous roar of the terrific explosions which shook the desert for a hundred miles around, and my own impotence in the face of such tremendous display of force. Nevertheless, we tried to give a good account of ourselves whenever we had a chance; especially in the northern sector, where a mixed detachment of ours put to flight a strong column of enemy cavalry, which, after trampling down the grain fields of the natives along Wadi-Khalassa, had dynamited also with a

single charge the magnificent bridge of El-Asludj. Only its massive pillars and some twisted rails, suspended in the air, remained to mark its site.

Both Ibrahim and Khalil Effendis who, upon approaching Jebel-el-Kern that morning, had been attacked by the English, gave proofs of great courage and sagacity. Fighting their way through the enemy lines, they reached Bir-es-Sabah with almost all their men. There the news had been broadcast that I, with my little troop, had been surrounded on Jebel-el-Kern, and that we had been exterminated or captured by the enemy.

Later I was informed that when Essad Bey heard that rumor he exclaimed indignantly:

"Exterminated, maybe; but captured, never! De Nogales Bey dies but does not surrender!" (*"Teslim etmes!"*) I value that remark of Prince Essad Bey's higher than all war medals given me.

Next day, at dawn, as I had suspected, the enemy cavalry retired toward the coast, distressed by thirst and harassed by our patrols. Their retreat left me once more in absolute control of Egyptian Sinai.

In order to render still more certain my grasp on those forsaken, rock strewn desert wastes, I had my camp removed from Wadi-Bagar to the foot of storied Jebel-Jelek, in the heart of the desert. From its lofty crest the iris surface of the Red Sea was sometimes visible on clear afternoons.

While I was busy tracing a new plan of campaign for the purpose of harassing the enemy rear guard communications between El-Arrish and the Suez Canal, I received a letter from Colonel von Kress Bey, congratulating me on the success of our expedition and ordering me to retire at once to Bir-es-Sabah, since our *Ober-Kommando* had so decided in virtue of strategic reasons unnecessary to go into here.

In view of such an order, logically I could do nothing but obey. I crossed the frontier with a heavy heart, because I realized that with me the Turkish flag was leaving Egyptian soil forever. *El-rassul-Allah!*

TAMMANY *by* F. W. HODGE

IT IS common knowledge that a certain famous political organization in New York derived its name from a celebrated Indian chief, but there are few, even among the members of the organization itself, who know or perhaps care much beyond that fact. Tammany, the English corruption of Tamanend, which signifies "the affable," was a celebrated chief of the Delawares, the Indians with whom William Penn treated for their lands in the seventeenth century. Indeed Tammany was one of the signers of the treaties with the whites in 1683 and 1697 which ceded vast tracts of land in eastern Pennsylvania, now occupied by scores of thriving cities and towns.

The Moravian missionary, Heckewelder, writing in 1818, mentions the high regard in which Tammany was held traditionally

by his tribesmen, who spoke of him as possessing all the good and noble qualities with which a human being could be blessed: virtue, wisdom, prudence, charity, affability, meekness—and hospitality.

Tammany's fame, naturally enough, extended among the whites, who fabricated numerous legends respecting him, so that during the Revolutionary War his enthusiastic admirers dubbed him a saint and he actually became established as "Saint Tammany the Patron Saint of America."

Indeed his name found a place in some of the calendars and his festival was celebrated in Philadelphia on May first of each year—a festival conducted on Indian lines, including the smoking of the calumet and native dances in the open air.

In this same manner various Tammany societies were organized. It is stated by some, however, that the organization was established in Philadelphia as early as May 1, 1772, under the name "Sons of King Tammany," and its tendency was strongly Loyalist. The name of the "saint" is to this day commemorated in that of Saint Tammany parish, Louisiana.

THE practise of organizing political societies on a pseudo-Indian basis is traceable to the period of the French and Indian War and was especially in favor among the American troops serving in the Revolution, many of whom were frontiersmen having more or less familiarity with Indian life and customs. Of these organizations only two now survive: the Improved Order of Red Men, national in its scope, and the Tammany Society of New York City, whose headquarters are still popularly known as "the wigwam."

The latter organization, sometimes at first known as the Columbian Order, originally patriotic and charitable, was founded in 1786 by William Mooney, a veteran of the Revolution and one-time leader of the Sons of Liberty, and was regularly organized with a constitution three years later for the purpose of guarding "the independence, the popular liberty, and the Federal union of the country" (most of its members having been Revolutionary soldiers), in opposition to the efforts of the aristocratic element to make the new government practically a monarchy, with life tenure for the President and members of the Senate.

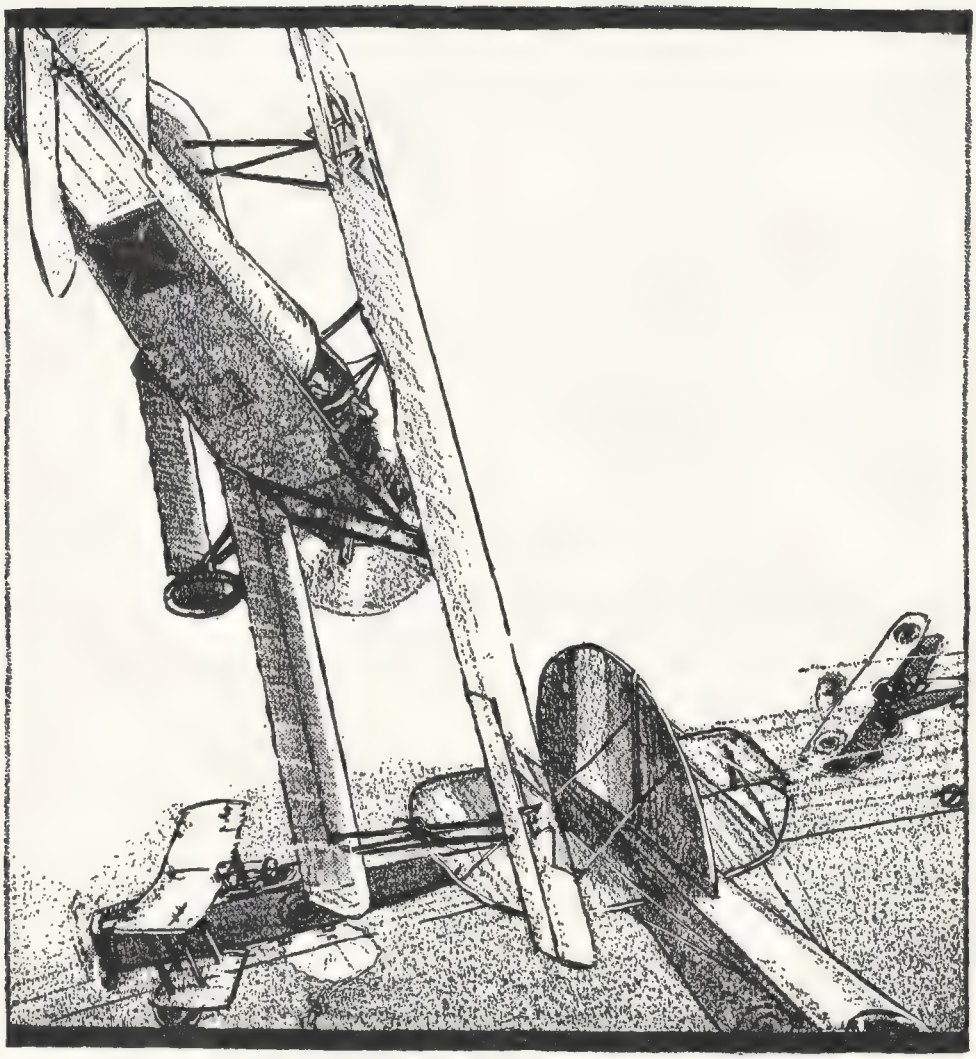
The society adopted the Indian title and formulated a ritual based on supposedly Indian custom, including its division into thirteen tribes or branches corresponding to the number of the original States, the parent New York organization becoming the Eagle Tribe, New Hampshire the Otter Tribe, Delaware the Tiger Tribe, whence the notorious "Tammany tiger," and so forth.

The officers were given Indian titles, Mooney himself holding the position of *kitchi okeemaw*, or grand sachem, for more than twenty years. Records were kept according to the Indian system of moons and seasons, and the members attended the regular meetings in semi-Indian costume.

From its inception until the close of the Civil War the Tammany Society was noted for its patriotic activities. It not only directed its energies, until the close of the War of 1812, to securing and broadening the foundations of the Republic, but it is possible that without its constant vigilance the Government might not have survived the attacks of powerful foes both within and without. Its instrumentality in the negotiations which led to the treaty with the Creek Indians in 1790 assured peace on the Southern border.

In the War of 1812 it furnished three generals for the United States Army and 1200 men from its membership for the construction of the defenses of New York City, and in 1861 it raised from its membership, equipped and sent to the front under its own grand sachem as Colonel, the Forty-second New York Infantry regiment.

The parent organization survives, but the branches long since passed out of existence.



A CERTAIN well known actor frequently gives vent to the statement that a pessimist is a fellow who thinks all women are bad and an optimist is one that hopes he's right. Switching it around slightly, I feel every once in awhile, that a pessimist is one who feels that life is short and fleeting and an optimist is one who hopes he's right.

I say this, mind you, with no personal prejudice one way or the other. I'm just Slim Evans, the laziest first lieutenant of the Army Air Service, living a quiet and peaceful life safe in the arms of my Uncle Samuel.

However, despite my earnest endeavors to give trouble, work and worry a wide berth, every once in awhile they're forced on me.

Taking a headlong dive into the last little embroglio that came my way, I came booming up the Border in a three motored Fokker airplane bound for Rockwell Field on a certain morning in February. Rockwell Field being on the Pacific Coast, at San Diego to be exact, and the present location of my servitude

A Novelette of a Border Patrol Flyer

STUNT STUFF

By

THOMSON BURTIS

for Uncle Sam being McMullen, Texas, which is close to the Gulf of Mexico, explanations may be in order.

In the first place I was on leave. The reasons for this pleasant situation were two. One was that a racehorse named Prince Regent in which I owned an interest was at the Tia Juana track being readied by my partner in equine crime for a couple of races. The second one was that an old friend of mine, an ex-Army flyer named George Groody, was in Hollywood picking up some coin with his flying circus in pictures.

For two months he had endeavored to relieve the monotony of squatting around the sandy stretch of the McMullen airdrome by writing me letters describing the delights of Hollywood.

Each letter closed with an urgent invitation to come out and assist him in taking care of excess quantities of wine, women and song which were on tap, and which he confessed himself unable to cope with, unassisted. He finally completed his nefarious work by notifying me that Cy Mossman, part owner and manager of the Coast Air Express, had bought a new airplane and would pay good money to some one who would ferry it out to the Coast for him. I was offered the job on a silver platter.

All of which accounts for the fact that at high noon I was spiraling this big Fokker down over Rockwell with nothing on my mind but my helmet and with nothing in it except a vast desire to have a swell time for a period of four weeks.

As I taxied to the line of hangars an officer came up to me among the mechanics.

"My name is Barker," he stated briskly, "and I presume this is Lieutenant Evans."

"Just as right as rain," I told him. "Has a guy named Redfield been asking for me around here?"

"I have a message for you from him," said the young shavetail importantly. "He regrets that he could not be over here to meet you and wants you to meet him at the Silver Fox bar in Tia Juana as quickly as is convenient."

I don't know why, and I lay no claim to being the seventh son of a seventh son, born under a caul, but right then it struck me as though there might be an Ethiopian in the woodpile somewhere. Knowing Buddy Redfield as I did, I knew that there was a doggoned good reason why he wasn't at the field and that the chances were ten to one that it was trouble of some kind.

"How about lunch?" Barker asked me,

after giving six unnecessary orders to the mechanics.

"No, I believe I'll lunch on beer and pretzels with Buddy," I told him. "I'll appreciate it if the ship is gassed and looked over right away, because I'll be starting north as quick as I can make it over and back. What are the chances for a taxi or other form of transportation hereabouts?"

"Get you one in two minutes," he told me, and was as good as his word.

Three quarters of an hour later, still with that persistent feeling that something was wrong, I was pointing into Tia Juana. Naturally, the first thing in my mind was that Prince Regent, our horse, wasn't in the pink of condition, nor yet the prime of health; and that, brethren, meant a very great deal to both Buddy and me right then.

It isn't the original cost of a racehorse; it's the upkeep of one of the hay burners that ruins you, and if boots for an elephant had cost a dollar a pair right then, Buddy and I between us couldn't have bought a pair of leggings for a canary bird.

The taxi drew up with a flourish before the Silver Fox, and in the shade of the doorway was the short, somewhat rotund figure of Buddy Redfield. He came out to meet me, his Panama hat turned down all the way round as was his custom, and his round, unlined face a little bit more tanned and a little bit more serious than usual.

He was thirty pounds heavier than he had been five years before when he was one of the great jockeys of the American turf, but in his oversized shoulders and powerful forearms there was visible a part of the reason why two wreaths of flowers had been placed around his neck at two different Kentucky Derbys, and why there was scarcely an important stake in America, from the Saratoga Cup to the Coffroth Handicap right there in Tia Juana that had not been won by that same placid, smiling eyed young man before me.

"Sorry, Slim," he said with his customary gentleness, "but I thought that just about exactly at noon today I had a chance to get some information that I've been trying to get ever since I've been here."

"Let's have a glass of beer," I told him, "to wash some of this dust out of my throat. How's the Prince?"

"Not so good," Buddy said slowly.

WE SAT down at the table and he took off his hat. His neatly combed black hair, lying close to his head, made his rather fleshy face seem rounder and more boyish than ever. It took rather close observation to tell that there was a very square jaw hidden beneath the flesh which covered it, and that those smiling dark eyes were very level and competent. Buddy was deceiving with his gentle manner of speech and his smiling serenity.

"What's the matter with him?" I demanded.

"Nothing, specially," Buddy replied meditatively. He took a soulful swig of the beer and then went on absently, "Maybe it's the change in climate, or the water, or something, and maybe it's just because he was too stale to be brought back into condition quickly. He just isn't on razor edge for Saturday, that's all, and I doubt whether he can be brought round that quickly."

"How about the Coffroth?" I asked him.

"Should be O. K. by then." Buddy nodded. "But that doesn't help us out now, Slim."

In those words my esteemed confrere had certainly given an economic analysis of much worth and considerable import. In fact we were both so dead broke that we couldn't have raised two hundred dollars between us until my huge salary of some three hundred-odd bucks came in at the end of the month.

Not that we hadn't made and then lost a couple of small fortunes on the big black stallion that was our pride and joy in life; but that didn't help us at the moment. A month before in New Orleans one of the sourest starts ever seen since the days of

outlaw half-mile tracks had left Prince Regent with his haunches to the wire instead of his head, and when he finished second by a nose, not only the purse but everything else we had been able to lay our hands on had gone to the spot whence no nickel returneth.

We had just had money enough to ship Prince Regent to Tia Juana, and at Tia Juana our plans had been very definite. We would run him on that coming Saturday in the full expectation of picking up a two thousand dollar purse and then run him in the Coffroth Handicap, which was worth over a hundred thousand, and thereby recoup our fallen fortunes.

You wonder why we had been so confident? No reason, except that in Prince Regent we had a horse which, when right, had proved he was practically unbeatable.

"No," I said thoughtfully, "that don't help us now. We haven't got a chance. Is that what you mean, Buddy?"

"I wouldn't quite say that, Slim," he told me, ordering two more beers in the sign language. "Prince Regent could beat most of these nags out here with hobbles on him. You know that. But in his present shape there's one horse in that race that's a couple of lengths better, everything else being even, if they were going to run this afternoon."

"Which means that unless this other mule breaks a leg, or goes off his feed, we pull down second money—is that it?"

"That's just what I thought I might find out today at noon."

I gazed at him over the rim of my glass in some surprise.

"All right, spring it," I commanded.

"Sounds funny, doesn't it?" Buddy said with a sort of a mournful grin. "Well, here's the lay."

He looked around him cautiously to make sure there was no one within earshot and then went on:

"This other horse has been more or less under cover all winter, and its name is Glenn Alcott. I happen to know how good he is when he's right and when and if they're trying with him."

"Who owns him?"

"There's just the catch. He's on the records as being owned by Francis Lamey, the motion picture actor."

"Does that mean anything?" I inquired. "Although I'm not a motion picture hound, I've seen the stout Mr. Lamey and I suppose he makes a lot of coin. I didn't know he was following the ponies."

"As near as I can find out," Buddy told me, "he fools with quite a number of other things that lots of people don't know much about. However, we'd know where we stood if I was sure that Lamey, alone and unassisted, does own, not only Glenn Alcott, but the three other horses that are supposed to be in his stable."

"Oh, I see. Well, what do you think? Remember I'm but a child as far as the racetrack goes."

"Did you ever hear of a plunger named Porky Hamilton?" Buddy asked me.

"Never in my life."

"Well, the situation is this: He's one of the biggest gamblers—sure thing gamblers, that is—on the track today, and he owns a few horses. They're not horses for him; they're betting tools. Going a step further, it's the opinion of a lot of men on the track that Porky Hamilton owns a lot more horses than the ones which run under his own name, see?"

"Which means that his kit of betting tools is larger than anybody knows." I nodded. "What are you getting at—that this Hamilton is the real owner of Glenn Alcott?"

"Yes, for a lot of reasons, but I haven't any more proof than I have of how far the sun is from here. Some wise birds think I'm right, too. Of course, it's against the rules of racing, if it's true. More than that, if it is true, the spots where a good horse like Glenn Alcott has finished this winter can be easily explained, and I'd have a pretty fair idea of where he'd finish in the stake Saturday afternoon."

"Which would be in what slot?" I inquired, taking another dip into the beer.

Gradually life was seeming less dark than it had when I had entered the cool, dim shelter of the Silver Fox.

"If Glenn Alcott is the betting tool of as smart and nervy and crooked a plunger as Porky Hamilton—he's just escaped being ruled off by the skin of his teeth a dozen times in the last few years—here's the way I have it figured. Glenn Alcott has never run anywhere near his real form, in my opinion, this winter. In spite of all that, however, in the field on Saturday he'd be bound to be the favorite except for Prince Regent. That means that the odds on him wouldn't be very good, of course. On the other hand, in the Coffroth, with a lot of real horses against him, the odds would be much longer.

"If Porky Hamilton is the power behind the throne, the chances are ten to one that Glenn Alcott will run about fourth on Saturday, go into the Coffroth at about five to one, and that then you'll see Pinky Smith riding for all he's worth and Glenn Alcott come down that stretch like a cross between an express train and a jackrabbit."

"At last I see what you're getting at. Prince Regent will win Saturday even though he isn't in top form unless Glenn Alcott runs his real race. If Porky Hamilton owns him, he won't run his real race, the chances are."

"Exactly." Buddy nodded. "And don't forget that in my opinion Glenn Alcott has never run his real race, which is additional evidence in support of the Porky Hamilton theory."

"Well, of course," I told him, "we weren't planning to bet on Prince Regent anyway in this take Saturday for the good and sufficient reason that we haven't got a dime to bet. I've got exactly one hundred and twenty-five bucks. I may be able to borrow a little from Groody up in Hollywood, but it won't be much. He's still one jump ahead of the sheriff trying to keep up the payroll on that oil thing in Texas, you know, and he needs every dime. How do we stand financially, Buddy?"

Buddy smiled a wintry little smile.

"I haven't got enough to pay my stable bills and room rent for Two Spot and myself Saturday night," he said quietly. "I've got the expenses made out here." He started to take a paper from his pocket.

"Oh, to hell with that," I told him. "Then we've just about got to win Saturday, or else be kicked out of Tia Juana one way or another. Is that right?"

Buddy nodded.

"And it so happened that the two or three real friends I've got here have been put in the barrel themselves," he went on quietly. "I don't know where I could raise fifty dollars right this minute. That purse would look bigger to us right now, Slim, than one of those big Special purses did a year ago. It just about comes down to this—if we don't get that dough, we won't even have a chance at the Coffroth purse a week from Saturday."

I'll admit that the full force of the dilemma smacked me right between the eyes.

"There's another thing," Buddy went on. "We've strung along with Prince Regent for a couple of years now, making plenty, losing plenty and having a lot of fun. He's no spring chicken any more, and it would be a sin and a shame from every point of view not to retire him to the stud soon. If we're going to make any money to repay us for all the grief we've gone through, it looks as though we'd better do it quick. If I knew that Porky Hamilton was behind Glenn Alcott, I could arrange to have plenty of people put a bet down and give us a cut on it, but as matters stand, as I said before, if Glenn Alcott goes out there to run, he's going to beat Prince Regent Saturday. Have you got time to go out and take a look at him?"

I got to my feet.

"I never saw the day that I didn't have time enough to take a look at a real horse when I was in the vicinity," I told him.

THE RIDE out to the track was a silent one. My mind was divided between two things, and Hollywood wasn't one of them. One was where I could raise a few hundred dollars, and the other one was Prince Regent.

As regards the first, it didn't take me long to decide that unless George Groody had some loose cash hanging around, I didn't have a prayer. I had notes at the bank, unpaid debts and didn't know a soul who had a nickel that wasn't working. I didn't have the remotest idea where I could get five hundred dollars without committing mayhem and assault and battery.

As I frequently have done before, I cursed myself for being the biggest flop as a financier that had ever come down the pike. When you get dough easily it goes easily, and when I thought of oil profits, to say nothing of the coin that had been made on Prince Regent at odd times, and how I had spent it, I had a headache that turned my head into a boil on top of my spine. Here we were spang up against it, and up against it through no good reason except that we'd both been gambling fools of the first water.

For some reason or other, perhaps the shimmering heat, or the reaction from the four-hour flight of the morning, or the effect of the *schnapps* I had consumed, I seemed to have no pep as we rode along, and for the moment my instinct was to shrug my shoulders and throw up my hands and say trust to luck. However, as we came into the back entrance of the track and I saw horses being led around, stable boys scuttling here and there, and felt that indescribable lift which is a combination of anticipated excitement and a deep seated love for the racing hours ahead, I started to prick up my ears, and the old pump began to work a little faster inside me.

When we came to Prince Regent's stall I saw a familiar bandy legged figure get up from a sun bath and waddle toward us. Mr. Two Spot Jackson, official jockey of the Redfield-Evans stable, came toward us, chuckling hilariously. He was two shades blacker than the ace of spades and not only the only jockey in the world as far as we knew who could really handle Prince Regent in a race, but one of the best riders in that same universe except for one thing, and that wasn't his fault. It was his black skin. White boys will gang up on a negro jockey in spite of hell and high water.

"'Lo, Mr. Slim," he chuckled. "How you-all this afternoon?"

"Not so hot, Two Spot," I informed him. "How is Prince Regent? That's the main thing."

The little darky, who practically ate and slept with our stallion, sobered slightly.

"He ain't jus' exac'ly right," he admitted. "But when that Coffroth comes off, watch us throw dust in the eyes of them other pigs."

"Lead him out," Buddy told him, "for Lieutenant Evans' benefit. Been a long while since he's seen him."

A moment later a disreputable looking little pup came frolicking out of the stall, followed by the wide nostriled Prince Regent. His ears were erect, and he was nervous as a witch, dancing slightly and looking around as if for unseen enemies, and when that black beauty hit the sunlight, my cure was complete. If I had to walk the streets of Hollywood with a tin cup and a cane Prince Regent was going to run the Coffroth!

"Now, now, you disappointed plowhorse, quit your kiddin'," Two Spot was telling him, batting him playfully on the neck. "Allus puttin' on airs, dancin' round like you never seed nobody befo'. If you'd just save your pep for a race, you might come in along with dem other hosses once in awhile. Stan' still, you buckin' skate. Ought to have been a mule, dat's what you ought to have been."

In two seconds or less as I stood silently gazing at the horse that was partly mine the history of the past two years rolled over me in a real flood of remembrance. From the time when Buddy had picked up a gaunt, nervous three year old whom bad

treatment had turned into a wreck and an outlaw, and I had put in some money to help him, it seemed as though every step in Prince Regent's development was right before my eyes, unfolding as on a screen. What had made that royally bred stallion —by Rex out of the Dowager, by Redemption—into a nervous wreck whom no man, trainer or jockey, could handle two years before? What strange bond of sympathy was there between the tranquil Redfield and that great creature before me? That a starving little stable boy like Two Spot was also welcomed at the court of the king was the final miracle which enabled Buddy to turn a bony colt, bought for a song, into the regal monarch before us—one who had won two world's championships in the last two years, who had survived the machinations of crooked horsemen and the handicap of his warped temperament to show his heels to the finest stake horses in America and Europe. He was still the most difficult proposition on the turf to handle, I knew, for a kind of fear of human beings, except Redfield and Two Spot, would never leave him. He could never become a placid Exterminator or a sweet tempered Man-o'-War.

Never in all the two years had he done anything except tolerate me, looking at me wild eyed and nervous and frightened. No human being had ever stepped in his stall except Two Spot and Buddy since I had loaned Buddy money enough to enable him to buy the Prince.

I don't know why, but the mere sight of that big black colt always sent tingles up and down my spine, and it wasn't because I owned him, either. Standing there with the sun glinting from his satin coat, he was as beautiful a picture as ever greeted popping optics, owner or no owner. Long barrelled, so deep chested that heart and lungs were obvious to a horseman, head held high as a king should hold it, powerful haunches. One's first impression, however, was the sheer beauty of him. One forgot that those mighty muscles enabled Prince Regent to take a stride many inches longer than that of most horses and only remembered than an animal so regal in appearance could be nothing but supreme in ability.

The first warm surge of affectionate admiration over, however, I noticed a few details as Buddy pointed them out to me in low tones. He was a bit low in flesh, his ribs a little too obvious and his eyes just a trifle dull, and now that I had renewed my acquaintance with him, it seemed that his movements were a bit sluggish. He was like a man who is slightly stale—a bit drawn, a bit tired, with a little of the love of life temporarily gone from him.

"Nothing the matter with him," Buddy concluded, "except that he just doesn't feel perfect, that's all. Shipping, change of climate, change of water, maybe a little bit off his feed—just one of those things. He's sound as a dollar. It's just a question of time when he'll be right on razor edge again, but not by Saturday. He doesn't sweat quite as he should after a workout, and it's just as plain as the nose on your face that he'd rather stay in his stall than run."

If there was one thing I had learned from my grief contact with the turf, it was that thoroughbreds are as distinctly individual as so many human beings, and no two of them are alike. Prince Regent was a horse that burned up a great deal of nervous energy, even for a thoroughbred.

"All right, Two Spot, take him back in," Buddy told the little jockey.

Two Spot, pouring out a steady stream of affectionate abuse, led the black stallion back into the stall. Little Hootch, the puppy which never left Prince Regent's side except when the horse was running, brought up the rear, trotting importantly with his stump of a tail in the air.

I glanced down at my watch. It was nearly 2:30 and there was little time to be lost.

"Listen, Buddy," I told him, "if I could do any good here, I'd stay, but I don't see that I can. My job is to get some dough by hook or crook before Saturday. Your job is to find out about this Porky Hamilton stuff—if you can, of course. A thought just occurs to me. According to the letters written by George Groody, he

knows everybody in Hollywood that you ever heard of and several thousand more that you haven't. This Lamey bird that's supposed to own Glenn Alcott maybe can be reached to get the dope. Some way or other, I'll get hold of some dough, and maybe I can get my hooks on enough to make a little bet if it's advisable to bet on Saturday."

"If we don't get hold of some," Buddy said quietly, "you know what it means, don't you?"

"Kicked off the track?"

"Either that or we'll have to sell the Prince, Slim, and at a sacrifice, too. I've played out my string, big boy. Mary's sickness drained me clean, including the house, and I'm half crazy trying to figure out some way to wire her some money by Saturday night so that she can stay in the sanitarium. There's no use in trying to kid myself, I haven't got a prayer and you're my only hope."

Those words might make it seem to you that Buddy Redfield lacked guts. Well, that's not so, gentlemen. The real truth is just the opposite.

There are a lot of birds in the world that are always thinning down their lips and sticking out their jaw and yapping:

"We're not licked! Let's fight!"

"Never say die" is a good spirit, but a lot of times it takes more courage to douse your false pride and say you're sunk when you know you are, than to try to kid yourself along with the world.

Anyway, as I scrambled back to Rockwell Field I was in an entirely different mental condition from what I was when I landed there. I wasn't on any vacation. It looked as though I had to do a lot of hard hoeing on a long and weary row.

When I got to the field several things happened to delay me. Four or five boys whom I knew insisted on holding a brief old home week. The left motor developed a slight stutter on the warmup; and it took half an hour to knock out of it. Last but not least, a wire was stuck into my hand at the last minute. It was from Hollywood, and the words which greeted me were:

JUST HEARD YOU WERE COMING STOP WELCOME TO OUR CITY STOP BRING SOME FEED BOX DOPE ON THAT PONY OF YOURS WILL YOU—JIM TAYLOR

For a minute, as I looked at it, my troubles rolled away and a large and joyous grin decorated my face. Jim Taylor was the man who had taught me to fly twelve years before, and I don't suppose there was or ever has been a living soul who occupied quite his niche in my memory—sort of half friend, half father, and one hundred per cent. man.

I had no idea he was within a thousand miles of Hollywood, but as I went rolling up the Coast, keeping in sight of the ocean all the way, I was a whole lot gladder that I was Hollywood-bound than I had been before that wire came. Which feeling of mine may help you to understand why what happened later hit me so hard.

II

THE ASSORTED delays back at Rockwell had eaten up a full three hours and I wasn't more than away before I started cursing myself, my friends and the motor in no uncertain terms. Unless my eyes and the clock deceived me, I was going to hit a perfectly strange locality at just about dark. Furthermore, the sky ahead didn't look so hot from a flyer's viewpoint, and unless I was mistaken there was going to be a rain storm.

It was one of the few times in my life when I haven't been mistaken. Half an hour later the rain started to come down and I was barely able to see the ground, and wondering what there was I could do about it.

I was supposed to land on the air mail field on the outskirts of Los Angeles, but as near as I could figure out, I didn't have a Chinaman's chance to find it in that combination of rain and twilight.

Ahead of me stretched a sea of lights ten or twelve miles long. Los Angeles is cer-

tainly the most sprawled out town in the world.

I took careful counsel with myself and, after asking myself various questions, I got only one answer. That was that with a fifty thousand dollar ship that belonged to a friend of mine under me, I had no business taking any chances cruising around over the city trying to find a field. There was only one thing for me to do and that was to get down as quick as I could and as soon as I could find a spot where I could perform that maneuver safely.

There was a very bad taste in my mouth, both physically and mentally speaking, as I peered down at the ground. There wouldn't be any sitting around with George Groody and the boys and tossing off drinks that evening. Mr. Slimuel X. Evans was destined to spend the night under the wing of an airplane, as near as I could figure it.

The Tia Juana liquor had worn off and my problems now weighed heavily on my soul. Life was a very dreary affair, entirely without merit, as I spiraled down through the rain.

I was bound for what looked like a large and level field entirely surrounded by trees. I had the windshield of the enclosed cockpit up because the rain fogged it so, and each drop pelted my face like a miniature projectile.

I got down low and scooted across the field about ten feet high to give it a look over. It seemed to be O. K., so I circled around, got a hundred yards south of it and started back for a landing. It would be dark in another five minutes, I estimated, and making a landing was the only possible thing to do.

I got her down all right and there was a very considerable amount of relief flowing over me as I trundled along the ground. I was about a hundred feet from the trees on the eastern side of the field and possibly one hundred and fifty feet from those on the western side. The ship came to rest and I had just started to get up from my seat when a loud and vulgar voice smote my ears—

"Throw up your hands!"

My mouth dropped open and I sort of subsided into the seat. From the trees came a man, a gun in his hand pointed at me.

"Don't make a move!" he yelled, coming toward me.

At that second a rather familiar sound struck my ears. I was trying my best to adjust myself to these surprising circumstances, for I realized subconsciously that there must be another airplane landing. There was just the whine of the wires audible above my idling motors, but at the moment nothing would have seemed too bizarre to happen.

What made me do it I don't know. I had no idea why a man should bust out of the bushes with a gun in his hand telling me to throw up my hands, and I didn't like his looks. I just did what I did automatically. In a split second I had shoved all three throttles all the way on and that Fokker leaped ahead like something alive. Whether that bird shot at me or not, I don't know. The roar of the motors was too loud. But I do know that I got into the air with just about two feet to spare. The undercarriage fairly dragged at the tops of the trees at the northern end of the field, but I made it.

I circled around to take a look at what was happening below, and as I took in the scene I sort of drew in my breath and my six feet six body straightened as though I'd had an electric shock. A small plane was trundling across the ground near the trees on the western edge of the field and I was just in time to see what happened. A second man, evidently a confederate of the first one, must have come out of the bushes on the western side of the field. Whether or not he had seen or heard the other plane will never be known, because, as I watched, that other plane ran right into him and the propeller just about cut him in two.

The fellow who had ordered me to throw up my hands was running like mad across the field. It wasn't the other pilot's fault. He had landed and probably had never seen the man who had crossed in front of him. As I watched, trying to

believe the evidence of my own senses, I saw the ship gather headway again and take the air.

It took me a second or two to pull myself together and decide what to do. There was one thing certain—I didn't want to go back and land and give the man with the gun a chance at me. Who they were, and what they wanted, I didn't have the remotest idea. The only thing in my mind was that I wanted to get a safe distance away from there to save myself a great deal of trouble.

The rain had practically stopped, fortunately, and the visibility was better. Three or four miles away there was a stretch of open fields, or so it looked in the darkness, and the lights of automobiles showed that there was a road running close to it.

"I'll get down somewhere, get to a phone and report what happened," I thought to myself. "I wish this was an Army ship."

Don't forget that that Fokker belonging to Cy Mossman was somewhat of a responsibility to have on my shoulders in addition to everything else.

I had no time to think of the other pilot and it was a stunning surprise to me to look up as I straightened the Fokker for those other fields ahead and see that other ship only a hundred feet away from me, flying north. I got a quick glimpse of the pilot, his face dimly illumined by his instrument board light. His goggles masked the upper part of his face, but I got an impression of a short straight nose and a square jaw with the mouth in between thinned until it was like a gash across his face. He looked very young, somehow, and I was thinking, "I'd hate to be in his boots."

Then another thought struck me. He must know that he had killed a man—accidentally, to be sure, but killed him. Whether the men were outlaws, or whatever they were, it struck me that it was peculiar that the unknown pilot should run away from the scene. For a moment I was tempted to follow him, but I gave that up.

"My job is to get this old lumber wagon down on the ground safely," I told myself. "Furthermore, it's not a bad idea for me to take a little thought for my own neck."

Which was no more than the exact truth.

I was flying east toward those fields and then and there I took my eyes off the other ship and devoted myself to the none too pleasant task of getting down on the ground.

I reached the open fields two or three minutes later and I was about a thousand feet high. The rain had completely stopped now. The clouds had rolled away and I could get a reasonably good squint at the ground. I was just circling the largest of the clearings when a great ball of fire suddenly lit up the earth five miles northwest of me.

It could be but one thing—a ship had fallen and the gas tank had exploded. In the momentary illumination of that explosion I saw that the ship had fallen in a large field, which, from the distance I was, seemed a safer landing proposition than the one I was over. I banked around and with motors full on, started for the conflagration, which was now just a little bonfire on the ground.

"Well, he'll never have to stand trial for killing that other fellow," I thought to myself. "I wonder what happened."

I could see people running toward the scene of the disaster but all of them were still some distance away from the field. It was a simple matter for me to land with the aid of that fire, and the Fokker had barely stopped rolling when I was out of the cockpit and running toward it.

THERE was nothing I could do, of course, unless possibly the pilot had been thrown out before the explosion.

As I got close to the remains of the ship I noticed something which caused me to increase my speed considerably. So far as I could see there was no body in that fire. As I got within ten feet of it, I stopped, took three more careful looks and then sat me down on the wet grass to meditate.

There was absolutely no sign of that ship's pilot. Had he been thrown out in the air, or jumped on the way down? I searched the sky for signs of a man in a parachute, but if the pilot had jumped in a chute he would have been down before then.

The vanguard of the oncoming people was at the edge of the field now and I got up and walked around the fire to satisfy myself that my eyes did not deceive me. I was walking along without noticing the ground at all and a few feet from where I had been sitting I stumbled over a box. I picked it up and in the light of the fire saw that it was a cigar box.

"That guy carried his smokes with him in quantities," I thought, and opened the box without particular interest.

After I got it opened, though, my interest increased considerably. I turned my back to the little group of people who were running toward me and took a quick but thorough look at the contents of that box. Unless several years on the Border had done me no good, I was looking down at several hundred dollars worth of dope. I brought it over to my ship and stuck the box under the seat.

"Things are commencing to clear up," I told myself. "I'll bet those guys back on the field were Government men lying in wait for an aerial smuggler and that young guy was their meat. He must have realized that they'd been tipped off and left his ship in the air by parachute to make a getaway."

Just exactly what I ought to do I couldn't decide for the moment, and I had no chance to for awhile. I was too busy answering a thousand questions from the growing mob of people. I was just about to make my way to the nearest telephone when a man on horseback came tearing across the field. As he got close I saw that he was the big, black mustached chap who had originally poked his gun out of the bushes at me. His horse did not have a saddle on its back, and evidently he had grabbed the handiest method of transportation he could find in order to get to the scene.

He threw himself off his horse and was about to jerk out his gun when I said, walking toward him:

"Don't bother with any of that stuff. Are you a Government agent?"

"You're damned right I am," he snapped, never noticing the gang of people that surrounded us, "and you're under arrest."

"O.K. with me," I told him, "but you're on the wrong track, mister. I'm an Army officer, name being Evans, and this is a ship I'm delivering to the Coast Air Express. The guy you're after was in this plane here and I've got something that I found which may interest you."

His fleshy face was white and I've never seen a pair of colder eyes than he had. They fairly bored through you underneath the brim of his hat.

"I see," he said. "Let's see what it is. Stay back, all of you!"

The miscellaneous gang of men, women and children did exactly as they were told.

"Listen," I said to him as we walked toward the ship, "it's hellishly inconvenient for me to be arrested, and you're off on the wrong trail as you'll soon find out. How could I know who you were, popping out of the bushes and telling me to throw up my hands? You didn't have any sign up to the effect that you were an officer."

"No? Well, we'll see about that later," he snapped.

"That bird evidently jumped in a parachute," I went on chattily, "and left his ship to shift for itself. I found a box that was thrown out of it and here it is. Unless my eyes deceive me, that's dope."

He took a quick look at it.

"Smart, aren't you?" he said sarcastically, "and that's a swell story you've fixed up. We'll see if there's any more stuff around that was thrown out of that other ship."

He went over that Fokker with a fine tooth comb and a somewhat bewildered bohunk from the State of Utah watched him and wished that he was back in his old home at McMullen, far from the complications of the West Coast.

"All right," the Government man said calmly. "Now you and I are going to get into the nearest automobile and take a little drive to the county jail."

There's no need of going into detail about the events of the next four or five hours except to say that after several dozen telephone calls, considerable grief, so much talking that even my tongue, which is always in practise, was about worn out, the witching hour of midnight found me rolling up to a little bungalow in the company of Mr. George Groody. I was out of jail under five thousand dollars bail, accused of being a dope smuggler and I was just about the sorest and most woebegone flyer that ever cursed the day he'd seen an airplane.

"Cheer up, big boy," the saturnine Groody told me as he drove his disreputable looking roadster into the garage behind the bungalow. "It's always darkest just before it gets darker. I think we'll find Jim Taylor inside. I didn't know you'd ever known him."

"Taught me to fly," I said calmly. "A great egg. What's he doing out here?"

"He's the craziest stunt man in the movies," Groody told me.

"That's funny," I commented as we started for the back door. "As I remember him he was a big, quiet, conservative chap—"

"He's still big and quiet, but he's far from conservative," Groody interrupted. "His kid brother is out here with him. Funny, but Jim takes so many chances you'd swear sometimes he was trying to kill himself, but he watches over his brother—he's a flyer too—like a hen with one chick. He certainly does worship that kid."

Groody led the way through the kitchen into the living room. A tall figure over in the shadows of the corner got up to greet me.

"Hello, Slim." I heard the deep, rolling bass that I remembered so well.

"Why—er—hello, Jim," I said stupidly.

I was knocked out. Standing there in front of me was Jim Taylor, all right, but I had to look twice to realize it. The big, brawny, slow moving ox of a man that I had known was now almost as thin as I am, and that's thin enough to crawl through the eye of a needle. His face was so gaunt and haggard that it looked like a death's head and his eyes were over bright. What had been thick, blond hair ten or twelve years ago was now as white as snow, and in every nervous move of the man who had been my idol when I was a raw cadet, I saw evidences of the fact that Jim Taylor was nothing but a shell of the man he had once been.

"Just in time for a drink," somebody said from the kitchen.

I barely glanced at the young fellow who entered, a tray in his hand. Somehow I couldn't take my eyes off Taylor. I'll swear he looked to me as though he was practically in his grave.

"So you're in motion pictures now," I said for lack of something else to say. "Why don't you ever let a fellow hear from you?"

"Oh, I don't know," Taylor said nervously.

He picked up a cigaret and lit it with a hand that shook. He looked fifty years old, if he looked a day.

"This is my brother Jack, Slim."

I turned around to shake hands with the good looking kid. Then and there I got the smack between the eyes that completed the process of turning me into a gibbering idiot. Standing there before me with his hand extended, his blue eyes staring into mine with a mixture of fear and defiance in them, was the pilot I had seen in the air five hours before.

III

RIGHT here I might as well slide in an explanation. It may sound funny to you that I, accused of running dope, out of jail by virtue of Cy Mossman's five thousand dollar bond, and in a tough situation generally, shouldn't jump at that kid and get myself out of a lot of trouble. The reason why I said nothing right then and little or nothing later on was Jim Taylor, and nobody else.

All of which means that Jim was something more than a friend of mine, because ordinary friendship wouldn't stand up under conditions which involved little matters like narcotic smuggling.

It all went back to my cadet days—and the life of a flying cadet in '17 and '18 was my idea of a combination of the Spanish Inquisition and being lion fodder for the benefit of the ancient Romans. I, in company with ninety per cent. of the youngsters who set out to be flyers at that time, had exactly one ambition in life and that was to be a flyer. We were knocked around by ground officers, were constantly facing discharge for the most minor of offenses, and were treated as though we were four layers lower than a second class private in the rear ranks. It sounds funny to say now, but to every last one of us, me particularly, probably, the constant menace of being canned meant just as much as bankruptcy would to a business man, or the complete collapse of a lifetime ambition would to any one else.

There was a feeling of utter helplessness, as though there was nothing we could do to help ourselves, and our superior officers frequently took pleasure in telling us how close we were to being discharged. Jim Taylor, my first instructor, became my only anchor to windward during those hellish months. Being an officer, his status in my eyes was a cross between the Twelve Apostles and the President. There was no reason for him to interest himself in just another raggedy cadet, but he did, and twice he saved me from being discharged. Remember that, foolish as it may sound, discharge at that time was a catastrophe much more to be dreaded than being crippled for life or something like that.

Until the day I die there will never be any one who occupies quite the position that he did in my mind. My life has been saved several times by the nerve of other people, and I've had a lot of favors done me, financial and otherwise, and there are loads of people I'm indebted to for assorted lifts, but somehow none of them stack up alongside of what Jim did for me. It was a combination of the time and place and the moral support at a difficult time which generated in my mind as deep an affection and admiration as a man can hold for another one.

He was a combination to me of older brother, father and friend, and I had never seen the day since 1917 when I wouldn't have cheerfully cut off my left arm if it would have helped to pay back the debt I owed him. It's probably silly, but that's the way I felt.

"Well," I said as I took a glass off the tray," this is certainly like old home week. You've got thinner, Jim."

"Probably because I haven't eaten regularly," he said with a mirthless grin. "That's the only good thing about Hollywood—you can starve here and have plenty of company."

"Right you are," Groody said.

"Don't tell me that you boys aren't doing well," I said just to make conversation.

My eyes were resting on Jim's brother most of the time and I had little or no attention to pay to what was said. You can imagine the mental condition I was in. There is something about dope to me which makes a nice, clean murder seem a comparatively minor offense. The combination of identifying that kid and the change in Jim Taylor himself sort of made me wonder whether the whole world wasn't upside down.

An addition to the puzzle was the impression I got of Jack. If ever there was a slim, clean cut, good looking youngster of twenty-two or three, it was he. He was blond and blue eyed and square jawed, with a nice pair of shoulders and a swell build, and in general he was one of the best looking men I had ever seen—in a collar ad sense. Furthermore, there was something frank and boyish in his face and in his eyes which seemed to give the lie direct to what I knew to be the truth.

However, there was one thing that struck me in connection with both him and Jim. It might have been my own scrambled mental condition and the

worries that were on my mind, but somehow there seemed to be an atmosphere of tragedy surrounding the two of them. It was not alone the change in Jim, or the strain under which Jack was laboring because of what had happened that evening. It was something deeper. They were like a couple of condemned murderers or something, and there were shadows in their eyes which seemed deeper than any momentary emergency could explain.

And as for me, sitting there wondering whether Jim Taylor was mixed up in dope smuggling, and if so, what I was going to do about my own situation, I was as close to normal as I am to being a midget.

I was wondering whether Jim and his brother knew that I had identified Jack. Perhaps Jim himself didn't know what his brother had been up to, but somehow I felt instinctively that he did. There seemed to be an understanding between them when their eyes met which was so deep that the idea of one having secrets from the other seemed unthinkable.

"WHAT happened to get you in jail?" Jim asked me with a pitiful attempt at being casual. He ran his hand through that white hair and then started pulling at it as he waited for my answer. The man I had known ten years before was the acme of relaxation. The man in front of me now was as nervous as a witch.

I told the story, being careful to say, that I hadn't even got a look at the other pilot and ended up by saying:

"I'll come out all right, I suppose; no reason why I shouldn't, but I'm certainly going to be introduced to Hollywood with big headlines that won't be so pleasant. I wonder how it happened that Government men were out there at the field."

"That's easy," George Groody told me. "You're in the funniest town on earth, Slim. Everybody, from animal trainers to flyers, flocks here to get some picture coin. Nine out of ten starve to death because the demand exceeds the supply. The flyers, when business isn't so brisk, have various ways of picking up a little jack. One of them is to fly anything from an ambitious chink to a load of liquor over the Border. There isn't a field within twenty-five miles of this town that hasn't been used as a dropping off place for a load of contraband of one kind or another, and if all the flyers who'd indulged in a little smuggling at one time or another were gathered together, the Hollywood Bowl wouldn't hold them."

"Then you don't think it was a definite tip-off?" I inquired.

Groody's hawk-like face lighted amazingly as he grinned.

"No," he said. "The Government has started to get active and I suppose you might have run into officers at any one of half a dozen fields."

"Well, that's that," I said. "By the way, Jim, I got your wire and you seemed interested in Prince Regent. Anything special on your mind?"

"No," he said rather vaguely, as if pulling himself out of a day dream, "that is—yes."

"Well, make up your mind," I told him.

I had a funny feeling, as if I wasn't talking myself. It was as if a second edition of me was doing the talking. My mind was busy with speculations which were far from the topics of discussion.

Jim sort of straightened on the davenport, pulling himself together. Jack was out in the kitchen, cracking ice.

"To tell the truth, Slim," Jim said slowly, "I figured that if you had some real feed box tips, I'd make a bet Saturday."

"I thought you were broke?" said Groody, hunching down in his chair and throwing one long leg over the arm.

He was a lean, narrow eyed bird who was one of the most experienced soldiers of fortune that I'd ever run into, and in my opinion, the greatest flyer that ever stepped into a ship.

I'd known him for years and was thoroughly familiar with what lay behind his saturnine, hard boiled exterior. A great guy, Groody, and able to take care of himself under any and all conditions. I could see in his eyes as he looked at Jim

Taylor that he was as thoroughly aware as I was of the fact that something was terribly wrong.

"I am," Jim said, "but I expect to have five hundred bucks tomorrow night."

"Just what crazy stunt are you going to do to get it?" Groody inquired.

"I'm supposed to ride a motorcycle down a hill, through a fake gate and jump it to a ferryboat about ten feet from shore," Taylor told him. "One of those things where the hero has to be on that ferry boat, doesn't get there quite in time, but catches it nevertheless, thereby foiling the dastardly designs of the villain, and all that stuff."

"Well, that's pretty mild for you," Groody said spaciously. He inserted a long, thin cigar into his mouth which made him look more natural. "When you look at your old instructor, Slim," he went on, "you're looking at the goofiest stunt man that ever hit Hollywood, and that means plenty. Have you turned down that collision thing, Jim?"

"That depends on whether I make a thousand or two out of my five hundred," Taylor said nervously. He got up and walked up and down the floor as if unable to remain quiet any longer.

No one said anything for a moment. I was looking at him as I might have at a freak, and Goody was scrutinizing him as though he was a new and interesting species of the human race.

Jim stopped in front of me and it seemed to me that he was quivering all over and trying to control it.

"You probably think I'm a cry baby, Slim," he exploded, "and I'll swear sometimes I think I am, but I'm in a hell of a tough spot. I've got to have some coin and I don't mind admitting it. If it makes you feel uncomfortable, I'm sorry as hell. I don't mean to make you feel lousy or anything like that, but if I could bet that five hundred and make a thousand or fifteen hundred out of it, it would certainly make life look different to me."

"How about getting your troubles off your chest, big boy?" I suggested. "Anything I can do to help? I haven't got a nickel myself right now, but—"

"Oh, it don't amount to anything, I suppose," Taylor said, "but what about that horserace Saturday?"

I could see that he was grasping at the mere possibility of making money on a bet like a drowning man would at a straw, and knowing Jim Taylor as I did, I knew that any other way he might have for getting what he needed had been exhausted.

"Well, the situation is this," I told him, and described it exactly. "And so," I concluded, "it looks as though it was up to one Francis Lamey to decide everything for us. Have you got any method of meeting that bird?"

"Sure," nodded Groody. "In fact I'll call him up right now."

"Good Lord, it's after midnight," I protested.

"That's just the shank of the evening for him," Groody told me. "I don't know him at all well, but I can make a try at any rate."

"Is he a good guy?" I inquired, as Groody went to the telephone.

"Not bad," Jim told me. Jack was coming in from the kitchen with fresh drinks as he talked. "He's a hound for liquor and women and I wouldn't say that he was the type of man that I'd like to make my best friend, but he's more or less harmless. He's just a flabby wreck now. He's about forty-five and looks sixty, but he still makes a lot of dough because he's a swell actor. At that, it's a mystery to me how he can keep up the stable of cars and the place that he does on what he makes out of the movies. He must have salted away a lot when he was younger and a star."

"Well, the only thing I can do is put the proposition right up to him and ask him whether Glenn Alcott is going in there to win or not," I said. "Buddy's as good a judge of a horserace as you can find this far north, and when he says Prince Regent can beat everything but Glenn Alcott Saturday, you're justified in laying in your dough. I'm sorry as

hell, Jim, that I can't write you out a check for what you need so you wouldn't have to worry about any horserace. By the way, what's this collision stunt that Groody mentioned?"

Jack had dropped into a chair over in one corner and at my words he got to his feet as though springs had been unleashed in his body.

"That's just a crazy idea of a crazy new producer," he exploded. "Jim, you haven't changed your mind about it, have you?"

"No," Jim said quietly, "I wouldn't do it, of course."

I started to say something and then stopped. Not five minutes before, when Jack was in the kitchen, he had indicated very plainly that he might do it. Evidently he didn't want Jack to know that he was even considering it.

"I'm still in the dark about what it is," I reminded him.

"A collision in the air," Jack told me. "A young guy named Travers came out here about a year ago with more money than he could spend and with a yen to be in motion pictures. He's making a flying picture—been working on it for the last eight months—called 'Air Hounds', and so far he's shot about half a million into it. He's got half the flyers in Hollywood on the payroll, and he's director, producer and everything else but the leading lady. Sort of a pastime for him to sling his dough into pictures, and he wastes enough in a day to finance a quickie producer for a year.

"He wants a collision in the air for his picture, no miniature stuff, and he's offering five thousand bucks to any flyer who'll shoot right into another ship in the air. The idea is to have the pilot of one ship jump out in a parachute and as soon as he's dropped out of the picture have the stunt man fly a second ship right into the other one, see?"

"That would make an interesting minute or so," I commented. "Before the said stunt man had a chance to jump out in a chute various little things like a gas tank explosion might happen."

"Anybody that does it will be crazy," Jack said fiercely with a glance at his brother.

"Mr. Lamey is throwing himself a swell party tonight, as usual," said Groody as he walked into the room, "but he said that if we wanted to come over and have a drink, we were welcome. Might as well catch him now as any time."

"Not me," Jim said. "I've got to go home and get some sleep. You too, Jack."

The younger man nodded.

"Yes, we'll hit the hay. I'm working tomorrow over at Colossal and I've got to be up early."

"I'll get the lowdown and let you know tomorrow," I told Jim. "Maybe we can all jump down to Tia Juana on Saturday and make ourselves a little money, eh?"

"I hope so," he said wearily.

Jack came up to me and put out his hand. He was dressed in flannels and a white sweater and as his eyes met mine it just seemed downright impossible that he was a dope smuggler.

"I'm glad to have met you, Evans," he said quietly, "and I hope that before long we'll know each other better."

His eyes were boring into mine as he said that and the inference in the words was unmistakable. Punch drunk as I was, with a mind that had given up trying to figure what everything was all about, I just shook hands with him without saying a word, because I couldn't think of any words to say.

"Come over and have some dinner tomorrow night," Groody told them as they started for the door, "and we'll have all the news for you by that time. O.K?"

"Glad to," Jim said wearily. "So long, everybody."

Groody and I watched them from the door as they got into their flivver and started off. Groody closed the door and his eyes met mine.

"Well, Slim, I wish you'd tell me something about this Jim Taylor," he said. "I've known him exactly three days and he gives me the shakes."

"If you'd known him twelve years

ago," I said, "seeing him now would give you more than the shakes. There's something radically wrong some way, and I'd go to hell and back to help him if I could. What do you know about him? I haven't seen him for years."

"I'll tell you on the way over to Lamey's," Groody said. "We'd better get there as quick as we can. I'm interested in that horserace myself. Having won a few dollars on your horse a few months ago, and needing a few dollars a whole lot right now, I might consent to be a gambler once again."

IV

A LITTLE bit later we were on our way to the Beverly Hills mansion of Mr. Lamey.

"Come on, now, what do you know about Jim Taylor?" I asked Groody. "I'm a hell of a lot interested in that fellow."

"So it seems," Groody told me. "Well, there isn't much to say except that he's been here for a couple of years and that it's a wonder he's alive. Of all the stunt men that Hollywood ever saw, he's the nerviest, or the craziest, whichever way you want to take it, according to what the boys that have been here a long time say. He spent about half that time in a hospital, been bunged up about every way that a man could."

"Been out here two years, eh?" I said. "Was he about the same kind of a fellow, I wonder, when he came here as he is now?"

Groody shook his head.

"No. He seems to be going all to pieces fast," he said. "What sort of fellow was he when you knew him?"

"As different from the bird I saw tonight as you are from the Queen of the May," I told him. "He was big and serene, seemed to have a whale of a good time in a quiet way, and never worried. He was the kind of bird who always had all his money loaned to some one else who was in trouble."

Groody nodded.

"I can understand that," he said. "It's like that brother of his. He's had him out here for about a year and he takes care of him as though Jack was a baby. He's grooming the youngster for a flying star. Thinks the time is ripe when the old Western stars will be supplanted by flyers. I think the kid can make the grade, too. He's good looking and photographs well. Boy, you ought to see Jim, so they tell me, when some Hollywood cluck tries to get her fingers on Jack. It's more like father and son than two brothers."

"That would be Jim all over," I told him. "He did about the same for me when I was a raggedy cadet. I'd give a hell of a lot to know what's got him so down now."

For a moment I had the impulse to confide in Groody, but decided not to. It seemed disloyal to Jim somehow and, until I got clean to the bottom of everything, I wouldn't breathe a word.

"Well, here we are," Groody said as we started up a drive toward a house perched on the side of a hill. "We shall now meet Mr. Lamey, and you'll probably get your first look at a Hollywood party."

It wasn't such a lot to look at, at that. There were people all over the house and others were arriving and departing all the time. Everyone seemed to be doing exactly as he pleased without paying any attention to the host or what any one else was doing. There was considerable steady and regular drinking, Mr. Lamey having, as was his habit, set bottles of liquor, oranges, lemons and ginger ale in psychological spots, and told the guests to pour their own when and if they pleased.

There was the swellest looking assortment of girls I'd seen together in quite some time, but I can't say as much for a lot of the men. Favorite costumes for a party appeared to be a sweater and flannels, and everybody was just sort of wandering around getting drunk. Nobody paid any attention to us. We just wandered in and started poking around the house for Lamey.

We cornered him on a little porch up-

stairs with a drink in one hand, a girl in the other arm and a second girl sitting on the railing.

"Hello, Groody. Glad to see you. Have a drink," he said, as we came out on the porch.

He was fat and flabby and his fleshy face was ornamented by an iron gray mustache. Years of dissipation showed plainly in the puffiness of his face and the bloated look of his whole body. Nevertheless, he had a nice smile and his iron gray hair gave him a certain distinguished look. He looked like what he was, a valiant eater and drinker, and the kind of fellow who isn't a bad egg, but collects obscene pictures in books, and in general lives as much like a sultan as possible—not that I know exactly how a sultan lives.

"Sorry to bother you, Mr. Lamey," I said after I was introduced, "but I've got a question I want to ask you as man to man, and I'll promise not to broadcast it."

"Sure. What is it? Come on, run down stairs, girls. I'll be down very soon. If any of those hunyacks are too drunk, call me."

The girls, a couple of dumb looking clothes horses, went without a murmur. I was to find out later that Mr. Lamey was the extra girl's dream. He was liberal and he had plenty of influence.

"It's just this, Mr. Lamey," I said. "I'm half owner of a racehorse, Prince Regent, down at Tia Juana."

"Yes? I've got some horses down there myself," he said, leaning back restfully.

He had no coat on, his shirt was open at the neck and the bulging line of his stomach was very pronounced.

"That's just it. We're in an awfully tough spot financially, and in the judgment of Buddy Redfield, who trains Prince Regent, that Glenn Alcott horse of yours can beat the Prince in his present condition. Are you still going to run him on Saturday?"

Lamey seemed to be taking more interest now, and suddenly as he scrutinized me I could see signs of a very efficient intellect behind that flabby exterior.

"Why, yes, I guess so, if nothing happens," he said. "Of course, I leave that to my trainer pretty much."

"Well, Mr. Lamey," I said, "I'm not going to broadcast this information for betting except to one fellow who's in awfully hard luck. Is Glenn Alcott going to run to win?"

"Why, of course, if he runs at all," Lamey told me, affecting surprise at the question.

"You're the only one that has anything to say about it, huh?" I went on.

"Just what do you mean?" he asked sharply.

"Oh, I thought you might have some partner or something," I said carelessly, "like Redfield and I are in Prince Regent."

"No, it's just a hobby of mine. I leave everything up to the trainer and when my horses run, they run to win, not that they do very often."

"Glenn Alcott is rated a swell horse," I told him, and somehow I was unsatisfied yet.

"I wish he'd prove it," Lamey returned. "He's never finished anywhere yet. Where did you hear he was so good?"

"My partner, Buddy Redfield. He's watched him run and he had the idea that he never had run his real race."

"Well, it's not because I haven't wanted him to," Lamey told me. "He's a little sulky and often times just refuses to run. Good horse, though, when he wants to be."

"So you're running him to win? Well, that's all I wanted to know, Mr. Lamey, and I thank you. Any time you want to know where we expect Prince Regent to come in, I'll return the favor."

I stood up and held out my hand just as three or four people came wandering out on the porch. You ran across some one in every room in that house.

"Not at all, Evans, not at all. You've got a great horse in the Prince, but I hear he's not in very good condition now. I wouldn't say that Glenn Alcott had a Chinaman's chance to beat him Saturday if you're running the Prince to win."

"Well, unless there's a change between now and Saturday, I'll give you this tip. We won't have a penny on Prince Regent on Saturday. It will be on Glenn Alcott if he's running to win."

"Well, gentlemen, see you at the track Saturday, anyway, eh?" Lamey said.

"Yes," I said, "and by the way, if it's any news to you, there's a rumor around Tia Juana concerning your stable."

"Yes?" he said idly. "What's that?"

"They say that a man by the name of Hamilton is your partner."

I was watching him closely as I said that and I got my reward.

"What?" he barked, looking around to see if any one had heard. "Who said that?"

"Oh, I don't know, just my partner heard it somewhere or other. Thought you might be interested to know, because I understand this Hamilton is quite a plunger."

"I don't even know who he is," Lamey told me, collecting himself a trifle. "Those ponies are just a little relaxation for me. I'm not interested in racing as a business, but I like to see my own colors ride sometimes. Good night. Come and see me again. Stick around if you want to and pick yourself out a girl and a drink."

"Don't mind if I show Slim over the house a little, do you?" Groody said suddenly, his sloping eyes narrowed to mere slits of light. "Mr. Lamey, here, has one of the show places in Hollywood, Slim."

"No, help yourself," Lamey told him. "I had a lot of fun fitting it up."

WE WENT back into the house. It was an ornate establishment and no mistake, but at that I had no violent yen at the moment to do any serious admiring of interior decoration.

"Here's his library," Groody said with a meaning look at me, and led me into a room off the head of the stairs.

A man and a girl over in one corner were looking at a book. It was a huge room, the walls lined with books, most of which had evidently never been read. Over at one side was a large desk and Groody led me over to it.

"Just thought we might run across something," he whispered. "May not be very hot to do this to your host, but when you sprung that Hamilton gag it hit him right between the eyes."

We took a quick squint at the littered desk but there was nothing of any importance that we could see.

"I see you *are* taking a look at the house," came Lamey's voice from behind us, and Groody and I turned like a pair of startled deer.

Never in my life have I wanted to sink through the floor as I did then. Lamey looked at us, his eyes reddened with liquor, with a cold and searching look.

"I was just admiring that picture over your desk," I stammered.

"Indeed?" he said icily. "This happens to be one room that isn't a hotel room in this house."

For a moment we faced him and then we beat a disorderly retreat.

Groody gave vent to a low whistle when we got out.

"Slim, just as sure as shooting, that Hamilton thing did crack him and when he saw us going into the library he was afraid we would accidentally notice something. Then he catches us at the desk, red handed. I wish we'd had a couple of more minutes."

"Well, I think we know all we need to know," I told him.

"Oh, my boy, but a thought occurs to me," said Groody. "If Mr. Lamey is mixed up with big gambling and that sort of thing it may possibly explain some vague rumors that have batted around the Government forces of this vicinity for quite some time. I got to know the Department of Justice down in Los Angeles, and I'm just commencing to wonder."

"Wonder what?"

"Where all Mr. Lamey's money comes from," Groody told me. "His salary is fifteen hundred a week when he works, which is about three-quarters of the time, and five years ago he was broke. That was after he got too old to play juvenile

parts and hadn't slid into character stuff yet. Drank like a fish and all that, then, and was in bad all around."

"Well," I said as we started homeward under a gorgeous sky, "I'm mainly interested in the horserace right now. Think Lamey is mixed up in a lot of stuff besides horseracing, do you?"

"Just an idea of mine," nodded Groody. "There are very tight strings between Tia Juana and Los Angeles, Slim, and there's more stuff going on back and forth across the Border here in a week than went on between El Paso and McMullen in a month."

"Well, it's none of our business, anyhow."

And with that we left it.

V

MAKING a gazelle-like leap up to Saturday, behold a party descending at Rockwell Field in Mr. Groody's airplane and starting forthwith for Tia Juana and the track. The party consisted of Groody, the Taylor brothers and myself.

Buddy met us in Tia Juana and we adjourned to a table in the Silver Fox.

"Well, Slim, what's been happening to you up there?" Buddy asked quietly. "Those headlines knocked me for a loop! How did it happen?"

I told him, making light of the whole thing, but what I did not tell him was that I knew who that other pilot was. I had steadfastly stuck to my story in Los Angeles and it was looking worse and worse for me. I was being held for trial, which meant that they were not convinced of my innocence, and somehow I had the feeling that I was being sucked into a mess and that I was as helpless as a cockroach being washed down a drain pipe.

Jim Taylor and his brother could not be dope smugglers, and yet they were. A hundred times I made up my mind to go to Jack and talk with him frankly, and yet I had the feeling that somehow if I did it it might be the last shove necessary to complete the total ruin of Jim. Of course I'd have to do it sometime, but at the moment I was sort of puzzled and bewildered and didn't know what to do.

"Well, what else has happened to you?" Buddy asked me casually.

"Nothing, except that I've got a job flying and being an actor next week," I told him.

"No? How come?" he inquired.

"Oh, Groody's working on a big flying picture—'Air Hounds'—and he took me out there and when the director caught sight of my sylph-like form, to say nothing of my fair face, he told me to come out next week, do some flying and he'd put me in a couple of bits as a comic mechanic. In our shape, I allow no scruples to come between me and a dollar, Mr. Redfield."

What I told him was the exact truth. When you remember that I'm six feet six, built on the line of a slat, and that I have a most prodigious nose and the longest neck in captivity you can understand that in picture work I wouldn't be any competition for the male beauties. But there was no kidding about it. I was going to fly at twenty dollars a day in this picture, and if you don't think I was glad to take it, you're crazy.

Jim Taylor just sat around the table. He didn't even take a glass of beer, although Jack did, and my old instructor was gazing broodingly into the distance as though his mind was a thousand miles away from us.

"Did you get my letter about Lamey and Glenn Alcott?" I asked Buddy.

He nodded.

"Well, what are we going to do?" I went on. "Jim here needs money desperately and he's got five hundred bucks to bet."

Suddenly the irony of the situation struck me. Here were Buddy and I, broke, with a racehorse on our hands and Buddy with a sick wife besides, and there was Jim, tragedy hanging over him like a pall. There seemed to be no way in which we could both win if Glenn Alcott ran his race. We had no money to bet on Glenn Alcott, or any other horse, and if

we lost the purse we'd be sunk ourselves.

"Well, what are we going to do?" I asked again.

Suddenly Jim Taylor snapped to attention. The gaze he bent on Buddy was almost ferocious in its intensity.

"Evidently Hamilton does own a part of Lamey's stable," Buddy said quietly. "Furthermore, for no observable reason Glenn Alcott has been running with two legs bandaged for the last three days and it's rumored around that he's not in such good shape. I don't believe the rumors. I have reason to believe from what Two Spot says that it's just a betting maneuver to keep the people off him. And there's another reason why I think he will run his race this afternoon. The Coffroth will be full of good horses and not Glenn Alcott or any other horse, even Prince Regent, could be sure of winning. It will be a big field and racing luck will have about as much to do with the winning as anything. If they've really been saving Glenn Alcott for a betting coup, if he comes out without bandages this afternoon I think we can be certain that he's out there to win, and play to it."

"Then you think he can beat your horse?" Jim asked intensely.

"I'm sorry to say that I do, this afternoon," Buddy replied.

"Well, let's go out to the track. We can't tell anything until the race comes along anyway."

It was a quiet group that went out to the track. Buddy hadn't said a word about our troubles or his own personal ones but I knew how he felt about losing the race that afternoon. It simply left Prince Regent and him stranded in a strange land without feed, money or room rent.

Our race was the fourth. Jim and Groody and I had gone over to take a look at Prince Regent first and then adjourned back to the grandstand. As the horses came parading to the paddock I took a quick look with my hired field glasses.

"Glenn Alcott hasn't got bandages on," I said excitedly. "I'll go down to the paddock and see Buddy. I'll meet you in the betting shed, upper side. Be right back."

I was over to the paddock in less time than it takes to tell it and got Buddy's eye as he hoisted Two Spot up into the saddle. The Prince didn't look so well and Glenn Alcott was plainly crying to run.

"What are the odds?" Buddy asked me.

"Even money on Prince Regent and everybody's going to him. Three to one on Glenn Alcott," I told him in low tones.

"Slim, Glenn Alcott's going to win this race in my opinion. It's a tough spot with your friend there in the shape he is. I don't know just what to say."

"You've said it, haven't you? God, if Prince Regent was right it would solve all our problems. Buddy, you honestly think he can't win today, huh?"

"I think Glenn Alcott can beat him today. Don't you, Two Spot?"

The little darky shook his head mournfully.

"De Prince has got to wake up plenty from what he's been doin' this week to beat dat hound if he's runnin'," he said lugubriously.

"Well, cheer up, Buddy. We'll get some dough somehow and if Groody and Jim win on Glenn Alcott maybe we can borrow some. Second money wouldn't do us any good, huh?"

"Won't be enough to cover our bills," Buddy said. "I've borrowed fifty here and there, Slim, in fives and tens. You'd better bet it."

"On what—Glenn Alcott?"

Buddy nodded.

IT MAY seem funny to you that pulling Prince Regent to make sure Glenn Alcott would win was never mentioned between us. It wasn't that we were so moral or anything like that, but to both Buddy and me somehow the Prince was sort of sacred. Thousands and thousands of innocent people had bet their dough on the assumption of our honesty, and just one way and another, I, who lay claim to no virtue of any kind, just wouldn't

have considered it. As to Buddy, a thoroughbred was a lordly thing, racing was a sport that he loved; for the honesty of sport he would have fought any living man.

I went back to the betting shed and found Groody and the Taylors waiting for me as the last bugle blew. Jim's haunted eyes burned into mine.

"Glenn Alcott," I said. "He's three to one. Hasn't got bandages on, he's in swell shape and it's as near a cinch as the racetrack ever saw, according to Buddy, that he's out to win. I'll swear, Jim, though, a horserace is a horserace. Couldn't you wait until some other time, somehow, when the Prince is right?"

He shook his head and there was such haggard despair in his face that it just about bowled me over.

"Tonight is the deadline," he told me. "Even Monday will be too late."

Well, I bet the money, six hundred dollars—fifty of Groody's and his last fifty, fifty Buddy had borrowed, and Jim's five hundred.

Young Jack was white and strained, and Jim was like a man whose life depended on the events of the next few minutes. His eyes never left Glenn Alcott as the horses lined up at the barrier. Prince Regent was not as nervous and prancy as he usually was at a race; just seemed dull.

The race was a mile and a quarter and Prince Regent was carrying most of the money. As they passed the stand on the way back to the lineup there were shrill yells for Prince Regent and the lordly black was on every tongue. Racing crowds are funny. The favorite rolls up money like a snowball going down hill. For no particular reason it seems as though everybody in the crowd starts betting on one horse, probably without any more foundation than a wild rumor that's been set in circulation. In Prince Regent's case, of course, the record of the horse made him a natural favorite, although horsemen around the track knew that he was not himself.

There were eleven horses in the race, but nine of them as far as we were concerned might just as well have been running in Maryland. I had watched many and many a race when there was much at stake, but somehow this day my heart seemed absolutely to stop beating and I felt as though there was some terrible menace hanging over us and that disaster lay just around the corner.

Jim was like a skeleton at the feast and I felt an actual physical ache as I realized what the race meant to him.

The crowd was silent now, the silence before a storm. Then—

"They're off!"

That thunderclap of sound fairly split the air. The crowd, most of them Americans who had had unusual quantities of liquor, burst into full cry as the horses came thundering down the stretch.

Buddy was not around, so I, with the aid of the field glasses, tried to follow the race.

"Glenn Alcott got away in front," I shouted to Jim, but he never moved a muscle.

As the horses hurtled by us Glenn Alcott was in the lead by two lengths, hugging the rail, and the others were pretty well bunched behind him with Prince Regent almost last. There was no change in their positions as they went round the turn and hit the back stretch. Glenn Alcott was running like a scared jackrabbit, still two lengths in front of the field.

Now Prince Regent was moving up. Little Two Spot took him to the outside to avoid interference and for the first time in all his life he gave Prince Regent a cut with the whip.

What it was, I don't know. Maybe it was the cut of the whip, maybe it was the stimulus of the actual race, but anyhow Prince Regent woke up. I could see his stride lengthen slightly and he started running over horses like the Prince Regent of old.

The swelling roar of the crowd was shot through with:

"Look at Prince Regent!"

"There he comes!"

"Look at that black horse run!"

Stride by stride Prince Regent was cutting down the distance. Smith on Glenn Alcott took his horse in a little on the far turn to give him a breather. He wasn't extended yet; and Prince Regent was catching him with every stride. As they swept around the turn Prince Regent was running a length behind Glenn Alcott, and on the rail.

For a moment I forgot everything as I watched that black thoroughbred run his race. That was my horse, the champion of them all, and I was strained forward as if to help him along. Bit by bit he cut down Glenn Alcott's lead until as they turned into the stretch Prince Regent was lapped on Glenn Alcott.

It was there that Smith looked around and saw what was happening. He took out his whip and settled down to ride. Glenn Alcott fairly leaped ahead, but only for a moment. Little Two Spot had his whip out again, too.

The Prince was at Glenn Alcott's saddle girth, being whipped for the first time in his life, and any traces of dullness or staleness seemed to have been forgotten. He was giving all he had and that was a magnificent all. His ears were back, his eyes seemed to be rolling wildly, and as he ran it seemed to me that it was more effort than I had ever seen him put forth before, as though he had to force himself to his matchless speed and could not reach it normally. With Two Spot riding like mad, the two horses were practically abreast now and the crowd was absolutely hysterical as that great battle went on.

I was on my feet, yelling like a lunatic. Thirty yards from the wire Prince Regent was even with Glenn Alcott. For five or six strides they ran as one. I saw Two Spot's mouth open and I knew that some wild yell of encouragement must have burst from his lips. Prince Regent was out straight as a string, head down, ears back, seeming much closer to the ground than he ordinarily did as those great strides ate up the distance. Five yards from the wire I'll swear there wasn't an inch separating those two noses.

I don't know to this day just what Two Spot did. He seemed to straighten slightly, his mouth wide open. He gave the Prince one last terrific cut with the whip and at the same moment seemed with his other hand to be lifting the Prince upward. Prince Regent gave one last mighty bound. As his nose went under the wire, all four feet seemed to be off the ground. Two Spot had fairly hurled him through the air—to win by a nose!

I sank down in the seat, limp. The crowd, the majority of whom had bet on Prince Regent, was fairly gibbering with excitement and satisfaction. It was then, and only then, as I looked around at my three companions, that I realized what had happened.

"Good Lord!" I said blankly.

Jim Taylor was shaking as with the palsy and as I looked at his face a horrid sensation descended upon me.

"Jim, don't be so worried," I stammered.

Jack was leaning over his brother, who now had his head in his hands. He was quivering in every muscle.

"Jim, boy, don't worry. It'll be all right. I'll give you the whole purse," I told him. "Come on, boy, don't take it so hard."

He sort of straightened up and his eyes looked into mine sort of blankly.

"I owe everybody in the world now," he said carefully, "and I know you need that money desperately yourself. I'll tell you what I will do, though. I'll borrow it and pay you back next week."

Two things went through my mind right then. I knew that he was figuring on doing that collision stunt for one thing, and that he must not be allowed to do it, but transcending everything else was the spirit I felt in him. For some reason I knew that if ever I was looking into the eyes of a man who figured that his game was up, his string played out, and his last hope gone, it was then. It was like looking into the eyes of a man who considered himself dead already.

VI

WE FILED down into the old fashioned wooden stand, crossed the mutuel betting ring, and during that procession not a word was said. Buddy met us alongside the bar as had been arranged. He scarcely looked at me, but his level brown eyes seemed to freeze to the emaciated Taylor.

"I suppose you can never forgive us for what happened," he said quietly.

Jim's attempt at a smile was enough to break your heart.

"Don't be silly," he said absently.

"Listen, Buddy, how much of that twenty-five hundred can we spare for a couple of days? Don't forget Mary."

"Fifteen hundred," Buddy said slowly. "That thousand'll pay our bills and we won't have a nickel, but we won't need it."

That was Buddy all over.

"That'll fix you up, Jim, so everything's jake," I told him.

He nodded.

"That's all right," he said carefully, "and I certainly appreciate it. I—"

"Oh, here you are," came a familiar voice from behind me, and I turned to confront none other than Francis Lamey.

We were standing at one end of the bar and there were no customers near us. Almost every one had gone out for the next race. For a minute I didn't say anything. Lamey was obviously under the influence of liquor. His white flannels were spotted, his tie was loose around his neck and his shirt collar was wet with sweat. His eyes were red and somehow his flabby face seemed pasty and cruel.

"Fine bunch of doublecrossers," he said, a slight thickness in his tones.

Then I got it. Lamey had probably plunged tremendously on his horse. He had been telling the truth when he said his horse would run to win. He and his associates probably had gambled a large fortune in the pool rooms around the country, and I may as well slide in now that Buddy's inquiries by wire within the next three days corroborated the opinion. Glenn Alcott had been backed off the boards with every commissioner from Havana to Montreal.

"Listen, Mr. Lamey, we were on the level. In fact this bunch right here lost six hundred dollars on your horse—which may not be much to you, but it's plenty to us."

"Yeah?" he said nastily, his eyes flickering from face to face. "And your nigger jock riding like hell! I gave you a right steer, you tell me to bet, and then I get the doublecross. Why, you were out there to win."

"Of course," Redfield cut in quietly. "We didn't think we could. And at that it was only by an inch."

"I never told you we were going to pull our horse," I told him, "but if you lost a lot, I'm certainly sorry. All I can say is that the next time Prince Regent runs you'll have all the dope that we've got—"

"Yeah? I wouldn't believe you if you told me the sun was shining this minute," Lamey said, and now he had lost any semblance of control. His eyes ran over the group of us with a sort of relish, as though he was rolling the thought of his revenge under his tongue. "And in a day or two you all won't be so smart."

There was a second of silence after that. It was peculiar that he did not confine his attention to me, or even to Groody and me. His eyes continually swept from face to face, as though carefully identifying every one for future reference.

"Some of you guys won't need any money before very long," he said thickly, and then, as though acting on a sudden impulse, he turned around and walked away very rapidly.

"That race certainly hit him hard," Groody said finally. "Not that I blame him for being a little sore. I wonder what he figures he can do, though?"

"We should worry," I said carelessly. "I'm sort of sorry myself, but all we can do is try to make it up to him on future races."

"He's probably got some influence in Hollywood, and maybe down here, if he's

in with the Porky Hamilton gang," Buddy suggested. "I think Hamilton has more than a little to do with the powers that be in Tia Juana, and their influence stretches out quite a good deal; you know, gambling and all that sort of thing."

Groody nodded.

"One of these days," he said slowly, "something's going to crack in this country and gambling and smuggling rings that nobody'd believe existed from Coast to Coast will be uncovered."

I knew that Groody had a slight idea of what he was talking about, too, because he had spent considerable time as a special Government agent since he got out of the Army.

We didn't wait for the other races, but started out to reach Hollywood before dark. Buddy had to stay behind with Prince Regent, of course. All the way up the Coast there was plenty of time for low and lofty meditation on my part, and when we reached Hollywood I had my mind made up.

The Taylors had dinner with us and after dinner I cornered Jim out on the porch of Groody's little bungalow. It was moonlight and that white hair of his stood out like a silver topknot over his haggard brown face.

"Listen, Jim," I told him, "a good many years ago you did more for me than any man has before or since. I know you've got something on your mind, and I'd like to have a chance to return past favors. I don't give a damn what it is—whether you've murdered twelve men, committed bigamy or anything else. Why not shoot the works and see whether I can't help?"

"Thanks, Slim," he said calmly.

For some reason or other he seemed to have pulled himself together during the flight. It was as if his mind was thoroughly made up and that he was resigned to some inevitable thing that was going to happen to him. He was fatalistically peaceful and those eyes of his weren't so haunted any more, as if they were fixed on some future condition which made his temporary state unimportant.

"You'll know pretty soon, I guess," he said with that eery calm. "Every one will. Meanwhile there's nothing whatever to do about it. I'm sorry to be in the shape I am, as though I was running around crying for sympathy and being a professional martyr, but it's been pretty tough, old man."

"Well, you've got the dough that you wanted now and we can get more if we have to. You're working—"

He nodded.

"Oh, sure, I'm fixed up for a few days," he said, "but what's the use of running around trying to stop leaks in an old roof when you need a brand new one? In another week I'll be in the same shape again. It's the same old story it has been for the last year, getting in deeper and deeper, trying to keep myself from being totally sunk, but making no progress in getting myself out of the jam."

"Even so, Jim, why not let me in on it? There may be something that can be done."

He shook his head.

"I'd rather not, Slim. If I told anybody, even you, it would complicate things and not help them out any. My mind's made up. Everything will be O.K."

That was said as a man who had been a fugitive from justice for years might have said, "I'm going to settle down and rest in a nice jail and quit fighting."

THEY went home early and as Groody and I watched them leave I said:

"You know, George, the puzzle to me in that situation, whatever it is, is young Jack. He must know the shape his brother is in, and I'm sure he knows exactly the reason for it. I'm equally sure that he'd do anything in the world he could to help Jim, and yet both of them together don't seem to have a prayer. God, sometimes when that kid looks at his brother it seems to me that he is going crazy underneath that good looking pan of his."

Groody nodded.

"That financial thing is funny, too," he said musingly, leaning against the porch railing.

It was a warm night without a trace of breeze and the coconut palms in the yard were motionless. The flowers around the house seemed to be putting forth an unusual amount of aroma, and it was hard to believe that things so grim as Jim Taylor's condition could exist.

"Why?" I prompted him.

"Well, he's made himself quite a lot of money since he's been out here by doing those crazy stunts," Groody said. "I never heard of any wife or family, and yet ever since I've been out here he's never had a nickel and has just been worried sick, apparently, all the time. Taking into consideration what you say about what he used to be, it looks as though there was some unusual pressure behind him all the time, like blackmail, or something of that sort, seems to me."

Then and there I gave in to the impulse which had periodically overtaken me. In a few well chosen words I told Groody the truth about Jack. My sardonic confrere gave vent to a low whistle, and suddenly his sloping eyes became very, very narrow.

"I see," he said slowly. "So they've gone into dope smuggling to get money, have they? Wait a minute."

One long fingered hand gripped the railing as though the lanky flyer were trying to take hold of something solid to hang to.

"Listen, Slim," he said swiftly, "I believe that's part of the reason for Jim's condition. By George, I'm certain of it."

In a second a light seemed to dawn on me.

"You mean that Jim's a dope fiend himself?"

"Slim," barked Groody, "now that I think of it he's got every single symptom, and furthermore there's a logical reason for it, too. He's been bunged up more than any human being I've ever heard of since he's been out here; laid in hospitals for months at a time. That's the way a lot of them start, you know, and I'd bet my last undershirt right this minute that it's the reason for his being so thin and so nervous, upset and—"

"And, listen," I cut in, "I'm as sure as I am that I'm standing here, George, that Jim knows that his brother was the one in that other ship. I'm equally sure that Jim Taylor would never be a dope smuggler for coin, for any reason—"

"I think you're right," Groody said, putting one of those cigars into the corner of his mouth. "If he was going to pick up any illegal jack, he'd fly immigrants in, or liquor, or something else besides dope. If he was in that business, he wouldn't be shy of dough all the time, either. You know what I think, Slim?"

"I think I do," I told him, "and it certainly is a possibility. If Jim has turned into a dope fiend and hasn't got much coin, it might be that he's been getting it from Tia Tuana just for his own use, see? Maybe Jack went down and that little cigar box was meant for Jim, and Jim alone. Who's been his doctor?"

"I don't know. Somebody down in Los Angeles," Groody told me. "Nobody that I ever heard of. I understand from little things Jim drops that he owes him plenty of dough, too."

"And look," I went on, "suppose somebody was wise to what Jim and his brother have been doing. Maybe that's an additional reason why he's constantly in a jam for money. He may be paying a little blackmail. Who can tell?"

"Of course, we may be all wrong," Groody said, "but that sounds reasonable to me."

"Jim may have cracked completely and be a professional smuggler and have introduced his brother into it; but on the whole, I don't believe it, and you know what's on his mind now?" I went on, and somehow I felt a thousand times better than I had before. I forgot that I was ticketed as a probable dope smuggler in the minds of every one except my friends, and that I was being held for trial, and all the rest of it. All that I could think of was that maybe I was getting somewhere in the case of Mr. James Taylor and his brother John.

"Well, maybe. What do you think?" Groody said.

"How much are they offering for that collision stunt?"

"Thirty-five hundred dollars, all hospital bills, if any, of course, and I think the last offer is five thousand if it turns out to be a good shot. Sort of a bonus to urge the goof who does it to make it a real crackup."

"Well, that's what's on Jim's mind. He's going to do that, as sure as you're a foot high," I told Groody. "He probably figures it's two to one he'll get bumped off and he's just going to leave that coin for Jack to live on in case he gets croaked."

We went on talking about it for hours without coming to any very definite decision about what to do. It was not until the early hours of the morning when we were about to go to bed that I remembered Lamey.

"What do you suppose Lamey meant, or was he just drunk?" I remarked as I took off my shoes.

"Oh, I don't know. Might be anything from a little tampering with Prince Regent to making you a little trouble on this case of yours," Groody said, "but the chances are it will be nothing whatever. Lamey's sort of a different proposition than the average motion picture actor. He owns real estate, he's quite a financier in his own way, and he runs with a lot of people outside of the picture game. Add this Porky Hamilton-Tia Juana stuff, and one thing and another, and it wouldn't surprise me, as I've said before, if he swings quite a little weight in the underworld perhaps. Before he got into pictures or anything he was a taxi driver, cabaret entertainer and owned a couple of joints finally, I understand, before he drifted out to the Coast. It wouldn't surprise me at all if he really could embarrass you a little, but probably nothing to be afraid of."

That's where we left it, and we didn't have a chance to see either one of the Taylors over Sunday. Sunday night, though, one of the assistant directors of "Air Hounds" called up Groody.

Groody went in to answer the call and when he came back into the living room he said calmly—

"Well, you were right, Slim."

"About what?"

"Jim and that stunt. You're called along with me for seven o'clock at the field tomorrow. The first thing that I have to do is fly one of the camera ships to take that collision in the air. Jim Taylor's going to do it."

Subconsciously I'd known that the tortured flyer would be drawn into doing it, but now that it was right up against us it wasn't so pleasant.

"Furthermore," Groody said, "he's made this arrangement. Five thousand bucks for the stunt and if he gets killed it's five thousand more, making a total of ten. That goofy amateur that's making the picture fell for it. Now what's to be done about that?"

I didn't know, but next morning Mr. Francis Lamey was the means of showing me the way.

VII

NEXT morning at eight o'clock the most upset flyer who ever'd been on a motion picture set, or anywhere else for that matter, was walking restlessly around the huge, specially constructed airdrome which was being used for "Air Hounds." Dozens of ships of all types were warming up with a deafening roar, panoramic Akley cameras were being inspected on the three camera ships and Bell & Howells' were being set up at various spots on the field. Two dozen or more flyers smoked and talked in low tones about the stunt which was to come off, and a couple of hundred actors, made up and in costume, milled around vaguely. Assistant directors were bellowing through megaphones and rushing around in motorcycle side cars, and the short, fat, partially bald young millionaire, whose hobby was throwing away money on a picture that had already cost almost a million dollars, was galloping around on another motor-

cycle, apparently having the time of his life.

For half an hour I'd talked with Jim, as had Groody, without budging him an inch.

"I've strengthened and padded the cockpit of my ship, and I'll come out all right," was his only answer. "It's just got to be done. Please don't say any more about it."

Never have I seen any one so calm, nor with eyes so unhealthily bright. He seemed to be the calmest person present and somehow I was positive that he was so charged up with dope that nothing held any terrors for him.

The ship which was to be run into was a big, obsolete bomber which was on its last legs, and Taylor was to collide with it in an old Fokker which was also practically worn out. I myself had been assigned to fly another Fokker, which was in better shape, in the shot which was immediately to follow the collision. That was simply a general dog fight.

The idea was that the bomber had the airdrome at its mercy and that the pilot of it possessed valuable information for the enemy. Jim, doubling for the hero, went up to engage it alone, his guns jammed and so he ran into it to keep it from doing any more harm, or from getting safely back to the enemy lines with the information.

I was next door to being completely cuckoo. I couldn't stand still, or scarcely think. It wouldn't have been so bad if a normal man in full possession of his own faculties had been going up to do that stunt, but to see my old friend forced by a lousy fate and tortured beyond endurance by his troubles going up to do it seemed like sheer unadulterated murder.

"Where's Jack?" I asked Groody, who was adjusting his helmet to take his camera ship into the air.

"Jim told me that he'd sent Jack away yesterday morning. He's flown to San Francisco in one of their ships on some faked-up mission or other. Jim didn't want Jack to know he was doing it, I guess. Well, Slim, there's not a damn thing we can do. I've got to take off now. I'll be glad when the thing is over, for better or worse."

The bomber was taking off already in charge of another stunt man. He was to set the controls to keep the big ship as near level as possible and jump in his chute a few seconds before the collision.

Groody's camera ship took off, the camera man in the back seat, and it was followed by two other D. H's with Akley cameras on them. Still a fourth camera ship, which would chronicle the crash of the two planes, was warming up ready to take off. My Fokker, along with several other ships, had been warmed for the dog fight which would be taken by the same camera ships before they came down.

I couldn't bear to go over and shake hands with Jim. He was over alongside his Fokker, and while stunts are not uncommon in Hollywood, somehow it seemed that the crowds of spectators and actors sort of gravitated to him. They kept their distance, however, and it was just as plain as day that they were looking at him with all the horrible fascination of a crowd watching preparations for an execution.

I drifted over close to him and I heard the director say:

"Now, all set, Taylor? Remember, you're to come down on him from above, and when the camera ships are set around the bomber over west of the field, you're to be two hundred feet above at the start of the shot. You've got the signals from the camera men?"

Jim nodded.

"Rocking their ships," he said calmly. "Same thing for Bert in the bomber, isn't it?"

"Right."

Suddenly, as Jim, his parachute flapping at his back, turned away from the director, who was scooting off in a motorcycle toward the ground cameras, a car came rushing into the airdrome, driving very fast. Jim took one look at it and in an instant he had fairly leaped into the cockpit and shoved the throttle all the

way ahead. He hadn't even had time to fasten his chute or his belt.

Then I took another look at the car and, sitting in the front seat, I recognized the mustached Federal officer whose acquaintance I had made on my arrival in Hollywood. Just as my jaw dropped, wondering what his visit meant at that time of day, and whether the three other men in the car were officers also, one of the assistant directors shoved an envelop into my hand.

"Taylor wanted me to give you this as soon as he took off," he said with a voice vibrant with excitement. "Don't know what it is. He said to just give it to you."

It was a long envelop and just bore my name on it. I tore it open only to find that it held another sealed envelop inside, plus a little note.

Dear Slim:

This is in the nature of a last will and testament in case anything should happen to me. I know you won't open it until after the stunt is over. I just want you to do a couple of things for me if I'm knocked out.

—JIM

Well, he was all wrong. As the officers piled out of the car I drifted back behind an automobile. I imagined they were after me, and yet why should Jim have taken off so hastily?

The camera ships, the bomber and his scout were droning overhead and now the other motors on the line had been silenced, their warming up completed.

Jim was wrong. I opened that inside envelop in two seconds less than nothing and here's what my eyes beheld:

To Whom It May Concern:

The undersigned hereby confesses that he was the pilot of the ship which on Wednesday, at the field east of the Mercer road, accidentally ran into and killed Government agent Samuel Till.

The undersigned jumped from the plane in a chute to escape and the cigar box filled with narcotics which was found by Lieut. John Evans was the property of the undersigned, and had been transported in his ship.

Furthermore, the undersigned wishes to state under oath that he has never sold one dollar's worth of narcotics, nor ever transported any in any manner except for his own use. Since spending four months in the Hospital with internal injuries, a shattered leg and a fractured skull, the administration of narcotics has been a physical necessity to the undersigned and have been supplied on physician's prescription by his doctor in Los Angeles. The amount secured from this physician was not sufficient for the use of the undersigned and he has been subject to headaches so terrific that his reason was threatened during their course unless a considerable amount of morphine was taken.

Due to financial circumstances, the only method the undersigned had of securing anywhere near an adequate amount of the medicine was by making arrangements in Mexico to secure same. No one else is in any way connected with the securing or transporting of the narcotics used by the undersigned except his doctor, whose prescriptions were necessary and ethical.

— JAMES TAYLOR

My whirling mind had just comprehended the import of that confession when the officers were on top of me. The mustached bird got in the first word.

"Don't happen to know where your friend Jack Taylor is, do you?" he snapped.

"No, I don't," I lied.

"I understand his brother Jim's in the air."

I nodded. Those birds didn't look any too genial. Remember that one of their number had been killed recently and while I couldn't be held responsible for that, I guess they put part of the blame on me, for some reason.

I was trying to think of a thousand things at once. I was groping for something infinitely more horrible than that note and in my chaotic mental condition, couldn't seem to get my teeth into it. Things were happening so fast that I just couldn't keep up.

"Well, Lieutenant," the one with the mustache said, "we've got everything dead to rights. We know who transported that dope and I guess you'll have to explain to the judge just why you and your friend Taylor arrived at that field together, and why you took charge of the dope when he tried to give us the slip. We've changed it around a little you see. You were both in on it. That story of finding it alongside of that wreck—"

I was scarcely listening to him. My eyes were on that scout, now a considerable distance away and climbing steadily. For a minute or two I watched it while that agent continued to talk and I had no more idea what he was saying than I have of what you said to your boss yesterday. As I watched the Fokker I saw something drop from it. I couldn't be sure, but I thought I did. Then suddenly what I had been trying to decide, and should have been able to minutes before, came right into my mind. Taylor had made an arrangement for an extra five thousand dollars if he was killed; this confession, which was only a half truth—it was as plain as day now to me. The chances were ten to one that he wasn't even going to try to come out alive.

It seemed to me that I'd blow up and explode if I didn't get over to the spot where his scout had been flying within the next minute and I started to talk in a rush of words.

"Warm up that Fokker!" I yelled to the mechanic who had been assigned to it, and as an assistant director came hurrying over I flashed Jim's letter in front of those men.

"Here's a confession that was just put into my hands a minute ago," I raved to them. "Take a look at it, and do you know what I think I just saw happen?"

The mustached agent's eyes flashed over it.

"No. What?" he said.

"Well, I'm not sure, but I think Taylor dropped his parachute over there when he thought nobody could see him. That son of a gun isn't going to try to come out of that stunt. He's going to commit suicide, that's what he's going to do."

They were knocked out.

"Listen," I went on, pleading as though for my life, "don't stop me from going up. He's got to be stopped from killing himself, some way. I don't know how, but it's got to be done. I'm not trying to get away. I'm an Army officer and I'm just as innocent as a baby on this thing. Even if I wasn't, I'd have to stand the gaff. You know that in your own heart. Let me get up, will you? I'll come back."

"What can you do?"

"I don't know. Is it O.K?"

For just a split second that guy hesitated and then he proved himself a good egg. Or maybe it was because Taylor's death would have closed the case and that they thought they could get a lot further with him alive. Anyway, he nodded.

I EXPLAINED the thing to the assistant director on the jump. He tried to stop me, but I threw him off. The logy bomber, climbing slowly, was nowhere near high enough for the stunt yet, and I had just a chance. I didn't know what I was going to do or how I was going to do it as I snapped on my parachute and gave my ship the gun. I flew straight as a string through the golden air for the spot of wasteland over which Jim had been flying and where I had thought I'd seen something happen, and I was right. I saw what was unquestionably a parachute pack caught in a tree.

"I think I know the reason for that," I thought to myself. "He wanted to make sure that he wouldn't lose his nerve at the last minute, that's what it was."

Any last vestige of doubt of what Jim was going to do had disappeared. He was up there to get ten thousand dollars to leave to Jack and to get out of all his troubles.

My mind was clear and working twice as fast as usual as I climbed that Fokker as steeply as she'd go with the Mercedes wide open. Somehow I felt that just being a dope fiend and in very bad health was not alone responsible for Jim's despair. There must be something else which made life a dim and dismal proposition, blackmail of some kind. Some one was in on what he and Jack had been doing to alleviate his torture. No, it must be only he who was involved. Otherwise Jack would have to stand the same gaff. Probably Jack had never done it before, or at least not many times,

and perhaps Jim had been forced to let him do it because of suspicion directed toward himself. Jim had figured out this method to avoid any possibility of Jack's being traced, and was taking the whole blame on his shoulders, where it doubtless rightly belonged, if there was any blame.

He was five miles south of the field, still climbing, but I was almost as high as he was. The bomber was circling now and the camera ships were in form alongside it. They were waiting for Jim. I was like a madman wondering what to do. The contents of that confession would let Jim off fairly easily, and why let a man kill himself to save himself a few months in jail? Furthermore, there must be some cure for him if money enough to give him the opportunity and enough skilled aid could be obtained. He simply must not do it—and then and there I made my decision.

It wasn't particularly nervy at the time because I was unconscious of fear. To hell with getting their perfect stunt, or anything else, as long as Jim was stopped! In a second I had that Fokker roaring past the camera ships. In sign language I pointed to myself and then to the bomber to indicate that I was going to do the stunt. Then I went over to the bomber, pointing wildly to myself and then at him, and he nodded. Doubtless they all thought that some new and sudden arrangement had been made on the field.

Groody never made a move. I guess he knew that there was something extraordinary or I wouldn't be there.

Now it seemed that Jim, a mile away, was aware by some species of mental telepathy of what was in my mind. He was a thousand feet higher than I was as I maneuvered to place two hundred feet above the bomber, and coming like a shot out of a gun.

The ships below me rocked. The next second the bomber's pilot left his cockpit and far below his parachute whipped out as I dived. Slowly and logily the bomber nosed forward as though in a dive. I was coming directly behind it, the Mercedes wide open ahead of me and seeming about to shake itself out of its bed. My head was over the side and I knew exactly what I was going to do.

A hundred feet from the bomber I cut the propeller dead. I had forgotten Jim but I knew subconsciously that the cameras were cranking. One was below and to the left and one to the right and above, and the other one on almost the same level.

The bomber was picking up speed with every foot now, but I was going faster. Suddenly I realized that I was not going such an awful lot faster and turned on the motor again. I believed I could get out of that thing, and at the moment I was sure I could. Flying exactly on the same course as the bomber, going at least one hundred and eighty miles an hour, which was thirty or forty miles faster than the bomber, I hunched down in the cockpit and sent the Fokker squarely into the tail surfaces of the bomber, cutting the prop just before I did it.

The shock, even so, was terrific, but the wings did not buckle back. I had hit it nose on, bashed in my radiator, and only my arm in front of my eyes saved me from going out like a light. There was a sound of rending linen and crashing steel and then it seemed that I was thrown sidewise. I must have hit at an angle and as the little Fokker tore through the rear of that ship it was spun to the right. The Fokker went into a nose dive and I was sort of rolling through the air in the crippled scout.

The tail of the bomber was a complete mess and my right upper wing had been partially torn off because the spinning of my ship had caused it to collide with the fuselage of the larger plane.

"I'm still here!" I shouted exultantly as I loosened the belt.

I didn't need to jump. I was thrown out like a drop of water off a wheel. I opened the chute and for a second was in a mad panic as I fought to keep from being tangled in the shroud lines. I won, however, and a few seconds later

was swinging peacefully down toward the ground.

Diving for that same ground like a shot out of a gun was Jim's Fokker.

I saw the other man land and the fourth camera ship get a shot of the explosion of the Fokker and the bomber as they hit about two hundred feet apart. I was still five hundred feet above the ground when Jim landed and taxied up to the line. Before some trees cut off my view I saw him surrounded by mobs of people and I knew that the officers must be on the job.

Now that it was over I felt weak and sick. It was as if I had come out of a delirium of some kind.

"Well," I told myself as I lay weakly on the ground after dragging in my chute, "Jim would have given the picture a better shot, but that wasn't a bad one. I suppose he's sore as hell."

VIII

I STARTED walking back toward the field, wondering what I'd find there, but I didn't have far to walk. One of those motorcycles with a side car attached came bucking along and in it was one of the Government men.

"Climb in," he said. "I guess she'll stand it. Get on back of the driver."

He stuck out his hand and we shook.

"What happened?" I asked as I climbed aboard.

"Well, for one thing, Taylor passed out cold turkey. They're taking him to the hospital now. Sorry to have to bother you, but I guess we'd better get this thing ironed out as quickly as we can."

He was a little, ferret faced fellow with a broad forehead and a pair of very wide set eyes that gave the impression that he knew what it was all about.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "I haven't congratulated you yet. You've got plenty of guts, Lieutenant."

"Oh, I was just crazy," I told him. "Let that go as it lays."

"O.K," he nodded.

We were bumping along rutty ground, and I had about all I could do to hold on to the driver.

"How did it look from the ground?" I inquired.

"Swell!" The driver nodded.

"By the way, Lieutenant," said the Government man, "do you know this doctor mentioned in that confession?"

"No," I said. "Never heard of him. Will you do me a favor? Right now I don't feel like any mob scenes. What are you going to do, take me down to jail, or something?"

"You won't be held," he told me. "We're seeing a little more light every minute."

We got another car before the mob had a chance to do any buzzing, and the newspapermen didn't start until an hour later downtown. Jim was in a hospital, they told me, under guard, and there was really very little they wanted of me. However, a funny thing happened after I had testified to two or three slight details, like how I had got the note from Jim, and that was that the man with the mustache and his three companions sort of ganged around me when it was over. There was a difference in their attitude, and instinctively I knew that they had changed from enemies to friends of mine. I was still there and they were congratulating me on the stunt, and so forth, when in came a couple of cops escorting a fat, oily, bald headed chap, very sprucely dressed, with the most worried look in a pair of the smallest eyes that ever were in danger of being sunk in fat.

"That's the good doctor," the fellow with the mustache told me. "Lieutenant, that little stunt of yours may work out to mean plenty."

I couldn't see Jim, but they told me that he was under proper care.

"I want the best doctor in Los Angeles for him," I told them as the dope doctor disappeared into another room with the cops. "I don't like the looks of that bird. What's he arrested for?"

"It's not up to us to talk now," the fellow with the black mustache told me. "We'll keep in touch with you."

Well, without going into great detail about the thing, events started to come to pass with speed and abandon. By three o'clock, ensconced back at Groody's house with my obligations to the motion picture company completely forgotten, I got a squint at the afternoon papers. The arrest of Jim's doctor, combined with the incident of the morning and the fact that my own situation of being out on bail had been a story of some prominence for days before, had produced streamer headlines all the way across every single page. I, deliberately keeping out of the way, was surprised to learn from the stories that prominent motion picture people of all ranks had leaped to the front with subscriptions of considerable sums of money. The police, it appeared, refused to divulge why they were holding the doctor, but it was stated from unofficial sources that the good doctor had been under suspicion for some time of giving too many and too generous prescriptions of narcotics to various people.

By the time Groody got home and later editions came out the snowball was rolling fast and furiously. A large percentage of the interest in Jim was out of sheer good-heartedness; and I don't mean to say anything different, but it's an equally true fact that the highpower press agents of Hollywood saw their chance to leap on the bandwagon and did it for their superiors with much gusto. Twenty-five thousand dollars was pledged, half a dozen of the leading lawyers in Los Angeles had volunteered their services, and an equal number of the best physicians.

Then Jack came booming home. He came into the house while Groody and I were still talking things over behind locked doors with the shades pulled down. He yelled who he was from outside and we let him in. His face was white as a sheet and he looked ready to drop.

"Tell me about it," he gasped; and I told him.

"Now, sit tight, kid, and don't do anything rash. Maybe we can get out of it without dragging you in," I told him. "I knew you were flying that other ship all the time. I saw you."

He nodded.

"I felt you had," he said slowly. "So that was what Jim was going to do. Well, I'll swear, maybe he would have been better off dead than alive, fellows."

"What about this doctor guy?" I asked.

"I don't know how Jim got hold of him first, and he never had enough money to change. He's owed him money all the time," he told us.

Well, by next morning lots more was up. Jim had been examined by two leading surgeons and they had stated unequivocally that an operation on the skull could do wonders for Jim and that there was every probability that it would mean a great improvement in him all along the line.

Furthermore the papers stated that at a late hour the night before Jim's doctor had made a clean breast of the fact that he had handled narcotics in an illegal and unethical manner, and that important revelations he had made concerning the traffic were being worked on by the Government.

At noon another fact came to light. The papers were going for that line like so many pups for a bone, hinting that the West Coast would be turned upside down before the full facts about the dope traffic, including the doctor's private list of customers, were exhausted. For the first time the name of Mr. Francis Lamey entered the case, and Mr. Lamey, it appeared, had left hurriedly for Mexico the night before.

By that time I was seeing reporters in droves and we brought in Lamey's conjectured Tia Juana relations in no uncertain terms. Meanwhile the Government agent admitted that it was on a tip from Lamey that they had run down the ship and its pilot whom they believed to be Jack.

Thereupon, on legal advice of two eminent lawyers, Jack fed the story by admitting that he was the pilot and that it was his first trip. At the end of the

week—during which time Jim had been operated upon, Jack was held under five thousand dollars bail and Hollywood was going goofy wondering who would be caught in the net—the situation stood as follows:

Jim was showing marked improvement every day, and would soon be able to stand trial. His testimony concerning his doctor, taken at the bedside, completed the ruination of that quack. There seemed to be no reasonable doubt that that greasy shyster had used Jim's condition to bleed him for dope and furthermore had practically blackmailed him over all these years. His surgical attentions had been inadequate and almost criminal, according to the other doctors, and he had been as much responsible as Jim was himself for getting him under the influence of the habit.

It was two weeks after that eventful morning at the flying field that a white, shaken, but somehow fundamentally healthier Jim Taylor was sentenced, if that's the word, to a private sanitarium to take the cure, and that Jack's sentence of a year in jail was suspended. Mr. Slimuel X. Evans was just as free as air, which was no surprise to him.

I had a chance to chat for an hour with Jim after everything was over.

"Well, Jim," I said. "This is a little better than being under the sod, at that. I know it's not a pleasant position to be in, and you may feel like a whipped pup even after you get well again, because everybody knows about it, but you can rest assured that the doc has gone away for a long, long time. Lamey'll go, too, if they ever get him."

"I haven't been able to keep much track of what's been happening. What about him?" Jim asked.

"He skipped to Mexico. He's connected with smuggling, crooked race horses and a gambling syndicate, it's been very well established," I told him. "They'll get him yet.

"You never knew how many friends you had around this town, did you, Jim?"

"Certainly has been an eye opener," he said, "but, of course, I know why a lot of people that I'd never even seen came to bat. I suppose—"

"Now don't go into any supposition. You were just a great guy in a hell of a tough spot because of a doctor that ought to be hung, and naturally they went to bat for you. And have you forgiven me for reading that note?"

He nodded.

"There didn't seem to be anything else to do," I told him. "You know that Jack has been offered a swell job with Colossal, don't you, to do flying pictures?"

Jim glanced over at his brother.

"Yes," he said. "It's a good investment for them, too, if I'm any judge."

"Well, Jim, they tell me you've got to get off to your hospital and get a lot of good rest," I told him as I got up.

A sanitarium intern was at the door.

"I'm going to stay until the Coffroth, and in that Coffroth the five thousand bucks that they've presented me for running into that bomber for you is going right on Prince Regent's nose, split two ways, one for you and Jack and the other for Buddy and me, so be praying for us."

I don't know whether he prayed or not, but through prayer or some other means, perhaps his own muscles, Prince Regent came home with a length to spare one week later, and that put us all in clover.

I've only seen Jim once since. He isn't and never will be again the man that I'd known, but as Jack's manager and director of the flying sequences in Jack's picture, you can see a tall, thin, white haired man, with thoughtful quiet eyes, who does his work efficiently, lives quietly and is apparently happy.

I always enjoy visiting the boys out there. Of course, never again will Hollywood be quite as much my oyster as it was when that story was at its height and I was a two-for-a-cent hero, but there's still enough of it left to overcome my peculiar physiognomy and unique style of architecture. I suppose you think I enjoy that adulation, ill founded as it is, and the result of a crazy minute. You're right, I do.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

"DEATH IN TIGER VALLEY" isn't Reginald Campbell's first story in *Adventure*. But this is the first chance he's had to make his bow before the members of Camp-fire, and he's not the less welcome for that.

Folkestone, Kent, England

In 1912, at the age of 18, I left school, whereupon I had seven quite adventurous years in the Royal Navy as a paymaster. I saw a certain amount of the Second Balkan War while in the Mediterranean, and then went through the Gallipoli campaign in the first part of the Great War.

In 1919 I resigned my commission in the navy, as I felt I wanted a change, and four years of war had somehow made me restless. I then got a job as forest assistant, or "jungle-walla", in a teak forest of Northern Siam, leased by a British firm from the Siamese Government. This job I held for five years, at the end of which time, to my great regret, I was invalided from the East suffering from dysentery and malaria brought on by jungle hardships. Since then I have been writing fiction, mainly about the East and the jungle.

To return to my five years in Northern Siam—it was a great life, full of adventure, and one of the few, in my opinion, that still holds a lot of the old-time romance. (Not that one appreciated the romance so much while one was out there, what with mosquitoes biting, poor food, and the loneliness and the danger, etc.) We lived almost entirely

in a tent in the jungle, and as the nearest missionary doctor might be anything from a two days' to a ten days' journey away, things weren't too nice when one fell ill. One of our elephants running amok, or occasionally a man-eating tiger or tigress prowling around, would add interest to the situation.

One year a man-eating tigress held up the entire work of one of our forests for months. The coolies and villagers all bolted, and before she was brought to book she was *known* to have killed twenty-nine men, this not counting odd victims she probably took from outlying villages. Hence my main idea for "Death In Tiger Valley."

May I say how pleased I am that the serial is to appear in *Adventure*? —REGINALD CAMPBELL

STARTING, way back of course with Eve, serpents have been the subject of controversy. It has not been limited to the more or less fabulous hoop-, glass- and milk-snakes, either—all of which have had their lengthy innings at our fire. The virulence of certain poisonous snakes is constantly in debate. Nor does there seem to be any more agreement in the matter of the habits and lethal potentialities of constrictors. The following letter is in answer to an exception taken by a reader to something said in regard to the latter by T. Samson Miller, in his story, "The Gold Chained Buzzard" (Dec. 15th).

Berkeley, California

A reader complains of the python episode in a recent story of mine, thus: "The idea of being capable of having pythons sitting around a camp, and said pythons being willing to do this, certainly is a new one."

On behalf of authors in general, I say that we generally know what we are writing about. It is our bread and butter. Surely if a reader doubts a statement, he might first make inquiries, before bawling out the poor author.

Now let me say a few things about pythons. I think I will upset some preconceived ideas. There are seven kinds of pythons, four known to Africa, three to Asia. The python of the Niger jungle is mostly the "regal python." It is said to attain a length of twenty feet, but sixteen feet is the longest I saw.

I was once questioned about a story in which it was thought that my python moved too rapidly. The questioner had in mind, undoubtedly, the sluggish and massive constrictor, the anaconda. In my story I had a python jump from water and gash the leg of a carrier to the bone. My critic asserted that this was nonsense. A python is too heavy to strike, he said. I had used an actual experience. I was in the lead of the carriers, crossing shallow water in marsh land. I heard the black cry and went back. There was no doubt about the attack of the python, but I had only the word of the black for it that the big snake had leaped at him. I had passed the spot and seen nothing. There was a clump of rushes about ten feet from where the black was struck. Presumably the snake had been lying in the rushes. Their habit is to lie in warm, shallow water with their heads on the surface.

Well, today I had a talk with the python keeper of the zoo at Fleischaker Pool, San Francisco. Mr. Dempsey proved well informed on pythons. He gave me an instance of a python striking over a distance of ten feet.

I ASKED Mr. Dempsey about the possibility of taming pythons. He did not think much of it. So I must refer my critic (the pythons, by the way, were not "sitting around a camp", but were around the village) to "The Lower Niger and Its Tribes," by Major Leonard. There is an authentic account there of the "Village of the Pythons." Major Leonard shows the big snakes to be quite docile under the handling of the priests.

Another doubt about pythons is whether they can constrict when their tail is unhooked. I have heard it asserted by African hunters that they can not. The regal python has a bony, prehensile tail. It hangs head down in the jungle, awaiting its prey. It also swings from branch to branch, as apes swing on their tails. It lies coiled in paths.

There was a recent account in a San Francisco paper of the death of an American prospector in Mexico. The American's horse stopped suddenly before a python coiled in the path. The American, riding carelessly, was thrown over his mount's head, right on the python. He was crushed to death. That proves both the comparative rapidity of the python and its ability to constrict without hooking its tail. If it gets its teeth into the victim and throws a couple of coils around, the purchase it has through its mouth grip is sufficient for constriction.

Mr. Dempsey, who before taking his present position at the local zoo, was for twenty years with Ringling Brothers Circus, convinced me of this fact. By the way, a twenty-foot coiled python wouldn't make as large a lump as a twelve-foot South American constrictor. Dempsey says the regal python hunts by night, when its eyes are silvered and it sees in the dark. But the jungle is always more or less dark, and as I have seen them hanging in the daytime, I wonder.

PYTHONS take their food by what is known as the "engulfing process." The big snake takes its prey by the nose. Its jaws are flexible, and work from side to side, with alternate moves; the teeth being curved inwards, the snake pulls itself over the prey, to a point where its jaws are so distended that

they can not work. The prey is now held by a suction in the snake, which *pushes itself over* the carcass. In the python den here the other week a big and smaller snake seized a rabbit at both ends, and only prompt action on the part of the keeper saved the smaller snake from being swallowed by the larger.

If you want to get a lot of very interesting misinformation about pythons, listen to the barker of a python show. —T. SAMSON MILLER

SOME of you old sourdoughs won't have much difficulty answering this one:

Succasunna, New Jersey

I must congratulate you on the cover of this issue, Feb. 15. I read about everything in each number, and thoroughly enjoy Camp-fire and Ask Adventure. There is so much real information in both departments, only Camp-fire makes one wish for a renewal of youth so one could start over again on a different trail. Now I am going to do something I have never done before, that is, ask one or two questions of the Camp-fire. It isn't often necessary to ask, because sooner or later some one asks them, and is answered, and so I am saved the trouble.

In most Far North stories, great stress is placed on 40° to 45° below zero being so terrific and dangerous to life. Of course I know that in the vicinity of New York City it would be lethal. But is it so noticeable in and about the Arctic Circle?

In my younger days I lived for several years in P. Q. Canada; have chopped in the woods there with the thermometer ranging from 20° to 40° below day after day, stripped to the shirt and sweating; of course, the feet, hands and ears protected. And although, naturally, we breathed hard, I never remember to have heard of frozen lungs. I shivered more while waiting for a train at Amelia, Va., one Christmas morning than at any time in Canada.

—HARRY S. BRIGGS

THE present book season is unusually rich in stories which appeared in our pages during the last year. Those of you who like to give your favorite *Adventure* serials a permanent place on your book shelves may now obtain: Commander Edward Ellsberg's "Pigboats" (Dodd, Mead); Ared White's "The Spy Net" (Houghton Mifflin); Emmett Dalton's "West of 96", published under the new title "When The Daltons Rode" (Doubleday, Doran); Talbot Mundy's "King of the World", published under the new title "Jimgrim" (Century); Redvers' "Cry Havoc", published under the new title "Show Me Death" (Harper's); and Harold Lamb's narratives of the Crusades under the title "The Flame of Islam" (Doubleday, Doran). An impressive list, is it not? And rather indicative of the reason *Adventure's* readers are pretty generally conceded to be as discriminating an audience as a fiction magazine is called to serve.

TWO more letters on the chances of a man's regaining a moving ship unaided, after falling overboard:

Lansdowne, Pennsylvania

I note in Camp-fire that Allan Vaughan Elston has received some criticism for permitting a character in his story, "Mystery Ship," to climb from the water to the moving vessel. It might be balm to Mr. Elston to know that during the year 1921 while I was attached to the Atlantic Fleet, I witnessed this very incident occur.

I had been stationed on the destroyer *Schenk* as official observer during target practise, and as we were coming slowly on the firing line, at five knots speed, a gunner's mate on the forecastle lazily attempted to lean against the lifeline on the starboard bow. The lines had been dropped to the deck in order to clear the line of fire of No. 1 gun, and the man leaned against air.

His fall was seen from the bridge and the engines stopped at once, but even before the small boat was clear for lowering the man was back on deck. He had come up alongside the bilge keel, which on a destroyer is only slightly below the water line, grasped it, worked his way to the fixed sea ladder (little iron steps with handholes, amidships on each side) and more or less calmly ascended to the deck. An added remarkable feature to this incident was that the gunner's mate could not swim a single stroke!

—ROBERT EMERICK

The second:

Cleveland, Ohio

I have noticed with a good deal of interest the discussion that has been going on in Camp-fire about the possibility of a man getting back on board ship after being washed overboard, without assistance from some one on deck. I also remember reading with great pleasure the story which created this discussion. It seems to me a point the objectors are overlooking is the fact that almost anything can happen at sea. It is true that I am not so salty a sailor as Bill Adams, friend Wetjen and others, but I did go to sea for three years, during and just after the war, and in this time I saw several men fall overboard, and fell overboard twice myself.

I will say that the chance of getting back on board ship without help is pretty slim, although there is the case which was discussed with animation at the scuttlebutt about the lucky gob who was washed off one of our ships by a heavy sea and up on the forecastle of the *Michigan* by another. I was with the fleet at the time this event was supposed to have taken place, but I never saw any official statement to the effect that the adventure actually occurred.

TWO gobs who were not so fortunate as this fellow fell overboard from a coal barge while we were coaling ship. One chap fell overboard in Boston in a snow storm and nobody missed him until we were well on our way to Hampton Roads, and then he was put down as a deserter. His body was found several months later and identified, which of course cleared the man's record.

On another occasion we were coaling at Hampton Roads and a big husky fellow by the name of Ormsby was shoveling coal beside me. I turned my back a moment to light a cigaret, and when I turned around to speak to Ormsby again he was gone. This made no impression on me at the time, as I thought he had gone on board ship for a cup of coffee or some other refreshment, and it was not until we made the regular morning check up that Ormsby was missed. As in the first case, his body was recovered miles away many weeks later, and identified.

A very strange incident occurred in connection with the return of his body to the family. The family was notified and requested to furnish instructions regarding the burial, and some one wrote in a rather tactless letter that it was not necessary to furnish instructions or go to the expense of returning the body to the man's home, but if there was any money due him or if any money had been raised in connection with the funeral, that should be forwarded to the relatives. As it happened, the hat had been passed to purchase flowers and assist in defraying funeral expenses and as is customary with the big-hearted gob, everybody had dropped in a dollar or two, with the result that there was about $1500 to dispose of. The ungracious answer annoyed the boys in charge of the matter and they decided old Ormsby would get one of the best funerals on record, and spent all the money available for flowers.

A THIRD incident I recall really has some bearing on the possibility of a man being washed overboard and washed back. I remember coming out of a very severe winter storm in the Gulf Stream. The change, which all sailors are familiar with, is so agreeable it will be easy to understand that we all crowded every available opening on the topside, although as heavy seas were still running, we were forbidden to go on deck. A group of five of us were standing in one of the hatchways leading down to the gun deck. A sea came over, picked one man out of the group and thrust him into the port hammock netting. He was just picking himself up when another sea lifted him clear across the engine-room hatch and slashed him into the starboard hammock nettings. This all happened too fast for any one to yell, "Man overboard!" And as a matter of fact he never did go overboard, but was washed from amidships to the port side of the vessel and all the way across to the opposite side.

I would say that if the ship had been a little bit lower in the water and had not been equipped with the hammock nettings, he would have had a fair chance of being washed overboard and back again, although it would be just as possible for him to go all the way and land in the beautiful indigo Gulf Stream several yards too far away to get back.

I confess that these remarks don't prove anything, but having seen a number of incidents like this I am ready to say that anything could happen at sea.

By the way, I notice that a lot of your Camp-fire contributors read Camp-fire and Ask Adventure first, and I have gotten into the habit of reading this announcement with an indulgent smile, but I find that I am doing the same thing myself. I do not know whether that proves anything or not either.

—PAUL CHRISTOPHER

P. S. My secretary says, what about the time I fell overboard myself? This was in the James River at Yorktown. I was sent down to do some tinkering on the Captain's steamer. I had several assorted rivets, hammers, cold chisels, hacksaws and oil cans in my pockets and in my hands. Being one of the black gang, I did not trip out on the boom with the nonchalance of the barefooted deck-hand, and I admit that I was not only mighty nervous but a good deal worried about what I was supposed to do when I got to the end of the boom. I think it was a chief boatswain's mate who yelled at me, causing me to lose my balance. He told me I had been walking across his nice white deck with greasy shoes, and as I turned to tell him something equally as ungracious I slipped and fell the ten or twelve feet to the surface of the peaceful James. We were at anchor, as I may have said, but the current bore me swiftly astern and the tools I had stowed around my clothes in various places had a tendency to carry me down toward the bottom. The steamer of course was out of commission, awaiting my ministrations, and this gang could do nothing for me. I didn't have sense enough to drop the tools I had in my hands or unburden myself of the ones I had in my pockets. Fortunately, some one was coming aboard just about that time and picked me up, tools and all. I remember that Happy Heidrich, who was our chief engineer, got an awful lot of kidding on account of riding his black gang so hard that they were afraid to drop their tools even if they fell overboard.

In this case, even without tools, I knew it would have been utterly impossible to regain the deck of the ship, and after the ducking I got I believe it would have been impossible for me even to climb into a launch without assistance.

I fell overboard in a snow storm off Staten Island once, but was fished out this time before I had a chance to get thoroughly wet.—P.C.

I PROMISED some time ago to continue, if the idea found favor with you, my occasional jottings concerning the members of our Writers' Brigade and their work. From the letters received, it seemed you liked the idea very much; but since then we've been so limited in space to devote to new features, that I've been forced to hold such news of authors in abeyance. We'll resume it now with a few late notes:

¶Commander Edward Ellsberg has just written a new story for us—a most ingenious tale of deep sea diving. Visiting us in the office the other day, he confessed to being overwhelmed by the whole-hearted and enthusiastic response his "Pigboats" received from you, and begged me to give his thanks here for the many kind letters forwarded to him.

¶Accompanying his latest *Hashknife* novel, "Tut" sends me an announcement which ought to please a good many of you. It seems that *Hashknife* and *Sleepy* are being groomed for radio broadcast, and that you may soon hear them enact their *Adventure* roles on your own set. "Tut" is adapting, as a starter, "The Medicine Man," one of the earliest stories introducing these beloved cowboys to the world, through the medium of our pages.

¶Lowell Thomas, author of "With Lawrence in Arabia", is putting the finishing touches on a life of General Rafael de Nogales. This book is based on the series of articles which have been appearing in *Adventure* and on the General's previous volume, "Four Years Beneath the Crescent". Incidentally, our articles are being collected for a book to be called "Memoirs of a Soldier of Fortune", to be brought out in England by the White-Brown Company.

¶Arthur O. Friel has been roughing it in Southern Mexico. He has brought back with him material for at least one or two good yarns.

¶A recent vistor here was Leonard H. Nason. As you know, he's been living in France the last few years. Now, after a short trip to clear up his affairs abroad, he's coming back to reside in the States permanently. And he hopes (as do we all) soon to appear in our Contents Page lineup once again.

¶Harold Lamb, now that his meritorious two-volume story of the Crusades is completed, has turned his attention for the time being to straight fiction. He writes me he is hard at work on a novelette of the Don Cossacks.

¶I don't know how any story could well be any more popular than Ared White's "The Spy Net". Yet he's just completed for us a novel of the Napoleonic era which we of the staff believe will receive greater acclaim even than that. It too is a spy story, and through it the Little Corporal strides prominently.

¶It has been brought to my attention by several of you that our Ask Adventure columns have become something of a source book for various newspaper-feature writers and artists. Following in the wake of Ripley's "Believe It or Not" cartoons, other syndicated pieces of like character dispensing "odd facts", "things you ought to know" and so on, have blossomed into being; and many such items seem to be culled regularly—and without credit—from *Adventure*.

¶You may look forward to a new story of India by Talbot Mundy in the near future. Also to a new *Don Everhard* story by Gordon Young.

¶And on hand also for early publication we have another of Hugh Pendexter's fine historical novels. This one is laid in the Everglades, in the days of General Jackson and the Creek Rebellion.

¶Gordon MacCreagh, marking time till he can procure a suitable boat for a jaunt to and through the Malay Archipelago—he insists he is going to name the craft *Adventure*—is engaged in writing a new *Kingi Bwana* story. Besides being an explorer of note, and writing some of the finest tales of Africa being produced today, Mr. MacCreagh is extremely adroit with the bagpipes, and can mix the best shrimp curry outside of Bengal. Your editor can vouch for the last two talents.

—A. A. P.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Dueling Code

SWORDS for two, and brandy for one—with a note on challenging an editor.

Request:—"1. What are the rules of the present dueling code?

2. Was the duel described in 'The Mad Rose' in *Adventure* correct in its details?"

—FRED E. BLAKE, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Capt. John V. Grombach:—The answer to your first question is rather difficult to answer, since real dueling is not officially permitted in civilized countries. There are therefore no legal dueling codes now in force. However, the following description fits a real duel were one clandestinely but correctly arranged in some country where gentlemen get more satisfaction out of an apology after first blood has been drawn than in recourse to a fight with fists in which there would be much spilling of blood, few apologies but no actual damage accomplished.

By most so called codes, in addition to the two participants and their respective seconds, there usually are two other men present, both neutral parties, a surgeon and a director. The director is not only an expert swordsman but either a *maitre d'armes* or an experienced fencer well versed in the rules and usages of fencing and dueling and able to control the participants by a strong personality.

The duty of the director is to see that the duel is run off fairly and correctly. He conducts the encounter and has full powers. He plays the same rôle as a director in a fencing competition, which might be likened to that of a referee in a boxing bout.

The description of a duel to the death in South America in "The Mad Rose" was correct in every detail, and surprising to followers of fencing, who are accustomed to the licenses usually taken by authors and actors.

It might be interesting to know that about a year ago in France, a newspaper editor fought a duel with a man then generally considered the greatest living fencer of the world. The duel was for first blood with an apology due from the man first wounded, the cause having been a slighting remark published by the editor about the fencing champion. The amusing part of the anecdote is that the champion was hit first, a scratch on the arm, thereby perhaps proving the pen mightier than the sword.

Diamond

SIZE for size, and perfect, the rose colored stone is more valuable than the standard blue-white diamond, or the rare brilliant black, deep blue, deep canary or green.

Request:—"Would appreciate whatever information you can give me on this subject: 'What diamond, or type of diamond, commands the highest price on the market?' "

—ED. W. S. BELL, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. F. J. Esterlin:—Regarding color alone, the rarest of all diamonds, is the "rose" colored gem; that is one with a slight pink tint. The green and orange colored diamonds are also very valuable, so rare that they are usually considered museum pieces.

Other rare colors are brilliant black, deep blue, and deep canary yellow; but none of these is as rare as the ones I first mentioned and which are never found except in small sizes.

Some years ago I saw a diamond which was water white except for a thin streak of green on one side of it, which produced a very remarkable effect in color, although it was really a curiosity.

Naturally with these rare and unusual colors the values are not standard, as is the case with "blue white", but any of the fancy stones are more valuable than the diamond of commerce. The rose or pink, size for size and taking perfection into consideration, is the most valuable.

Boat

TRIPPING around the Potomac reminds Raymond S. Spears of those old Maryland oysters—and he recommends traveling slowly through such good country.

Request:—"Two other chaps and myself intend to do a bit of promiscuous boating this coming summer and none of us knows much about how to begin operations. Our tours will mostly be confined to the Potomac—although we may possibly wander into Chesapeake Bay occasionally.

Our idea is something on these lines: We understand that the U. S. Shipping Board has a number of old ships 'parked' in the Potomac down around Alexandria, Virginia, somewhere. It is rumored that one can buy a lifeboat off one of these ships at a low cost. We think it would be a good stunt to get one, rig up some sort of sails, and also install an old auto motor in it. We also intend to build a cabin on it. One of the fellows has been to sea several times and has a pretty fair idea of how to install the sails and whatever is in connection with them, and also the cabin arrangement, etc.

It may be that our idea of centering activities on a lifeboat is 'all wet' and I should like to be certain.

Now will you please endeavor to untangle a little sense from the above and let me know soon what you think of the proposition? It's about time to get things started now if we ever propose to get anywhere because, being dubs, it will take us some time to complete the necessary work."

—PAUL G. RICHARDSON, Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—You'll have a lot of pleasure tripping around the Potomac.

And those boats sold by the Navy are fine; often first class condition, but discarded on account of improved models.

Motors have been successfully installed in boats for power, but they are automobile motors. I wonder if you couldn't pick up a second hand, discarded Navy motor, too?

My own notion would be an outboard motor. It takes up little room. Carry a lot of fuel in lockers, and if not fast you use little fuel and oil. Second hand, good condition, you'd travel far for little money. Another man and I wandered hundreds of miles in a log canoe (Cunner) with 4 H.P. old style Dubris motor—$1 a day or so.

Get the Hydrographic Survey charts of the bay and river—lot of shallows, few inches deep, navigation some stunt in wind, fog, night; you may run ashore a few times out in the marshes.

Lifeboat safest and best model. Pretty deep draft for shoal water, though. At the same time it's O.K. in channels. You could make experimental cruise in livery boat, and figure on your problems. Use canvas hoods to cover whole length, rig hammocks, and cook on gasoline. (I'll never forget Potomac old green oysters, no indeedy!)

If you aren't looking for speed, say more than 6 or 8 miles an hour, you won't need much power. And I've found speed a big detriment to seeing the country—and when I want to see water right, I go in a 16-foot rowboat, even on Lake Superior.

Taxidermy

HELPS for the hunter who wants to make his pelts into rugs.

Request:—"I am planning on trapping wolves, lion, etc., next winter and will be without access to civilization. I intend mounting in the rug form with full head most of my catch. Will you please advise:

1. What tools and implements I shall take? What supplies in the chemical, eye, tooth, etc., line?
2. What quantities of everything I should take?"

—FRANK S. JENKINS, JR., Eureka, Colorado

Reply, by Mr. Seth W. Bullock:—1. I recommend that you get Rowley's "Taxidermy and Museum Exhibition" published by Appleton, N. Y. City. This is very complete and covers the field in which you are interested in full detail.

It will give a complete list of the tools used in the various operations and from which you will be able to choose those which seem to fit into your scheme of things for the work you intend to do. With this book in your hands it will be more practicable for you to choose what you need, knowing the conditions under which you will have to work, than it would be for me to try to itemize a list for you that would not quite fit.

2. As to the quantities of material you should take, it would be very difficult for me to estimate, not knowing the possibilities of your catch, and I therefore hesitate to do so for fear of loading you up unnecessarily. This you can understand.

However, with the above book in your hands and your own personal knowledge of the country and its possibilities, you will be in a far better position to decide these things for yourself.

You will not, I take it, be in a position to do more than the skinning and curing on the ground. In fact if you do intend to finish the job where you locate, you will find that you have very little time to do anything else but. It would be my suggestion that you do no more than merely care for your kills and finish up when you return to civilization. That will simplify the amount of tools and material you will have to take, and should consist of no more than a set of skinning knives, plenty of salt and a quan-

tity of preservative mixture to prevent the ravages of bugs, etc. If you attempt to do the whole thing on the ground you will find that the bulk of material needed will seriously hinder your progress and comfort. You will understand why when you have looked over the volume named above.

Revolver

WITH which joint of the forefinger should a stiff trigger be pulled?

Request:—"1. With which joint of the forefinger should a Smith & Wesson .38 hammerless be fired? (As you know, this is entirely double action, and has a stiff pull.)

2. Can you give me any pointers on learning to use this gun accurately and fast?"

—V. J. CONNORS, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—1. I pull my own revolver triggers with the second joint of the index finger, as I find it strong enough. Some try to use the first, or end, joint, but I don't believe that practical.

2. In using one of these revolvers, I don't make any effort to take close sight; merely flip the weapon from its pocket holster (I use a Hardy quick-draw made by him to my pattern. I may add) and level it at the mark as I draw the trigger to the firing position. Just like the old "look and point" they told me of in the past days in Oklahoma Territory.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.

3. Extent of Service—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 303 Laurel Ave., Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, New Jersey.

Motor Camping MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.

Yachting A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 939 Timberman Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmwood Ave., Evaston, Illinois.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmwood Ave., Evanston, Illinois.

Camping and Woodcraft HORACE KEPHART, Bryson City, N. C.

Mining and Prospecting *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting: development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystalography, color and chemical composition.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.*—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada *General office, especially immigration work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk, General Information.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters *Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 333 Fifty-fourth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

Horses *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 7 Block "S," Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Ichthyology *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Orthnithology *General information on birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Photography *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology (*a*) *Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology.* (*b*) *Languages and the problems of race migration.* (*c*) *Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, 73 Farmington Ave., Longmeadow, Mass.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York *Herald Tribune*, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skating FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

Skiing and Snowshoeing W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Hockey "Daniel," *The World-Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

Archery EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 455 West 23rd St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 3 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 4 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 5 *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 6 *Arctic Ocean.* (*Siberian Waters*).—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

Borneo CAPT. BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★ **New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★ **Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 3 *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 4 *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★ **Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn. and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.* — CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

Asia Minor DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 1 *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Kenya, Tanganyika, the Congo and Uganda.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure.*

Africa Part 4 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan route.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 5 *Tunis and Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 6 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 7 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—W. C. COLLINS, care *Adventure.*

Africa Part 8 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 9** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1 *Jugo-Slavia and Greece.*—CAPT. WM. W. JENNA, West Point, New York.

Europe Part 2 *Albania.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 4 *Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Poland.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 5 *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

Europe Part 6 *Great Britain.* THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, London, W. C. 2, England.

Europe Part 7 *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

Europe Part 8 *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Drive, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

Europe Part 9 *Belgium.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

Europe Part 10 *Switzerland.*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse, 82, Bern, Switzerland.

Europe part 12 *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

South America Part 3 *Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, southern Appalachians.*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care *Adventure.*

✠**West Indies** *Cuba Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 143 Waverly Place, New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southern Lower California.*—C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of S. P. ROADMASTER, San Jose, Cal.

Mexico Part 3 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Mexico Part 4 *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Nochixtlan, Oaxaca, Mexico.

Newfoundland.—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**Canada Part 2** *Southeastern Quebec.*—JAS. F. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada.

✠**Canada Part 3** *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.* Trips for sport and Adventure—big game, fishing, canoeing, Northland travel, also H. B. Company Posts, Indian tribes and present condtions.—S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), 45 Vernon St., Toronto, Can.

✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, Desoronto, Ont. Canada.

✠**Canada Part 5** *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario.* Also national parks.—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 115 Huron St., Walkerville, Ont., Canada.

Canada Part 6 *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

Canada Part 7 *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 5607 Virginia Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Utah and Arizona.*—E. E. HARRIMAN, 1832 Arlington Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 2 *New Mexico.* Also Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance.—H. F. ROBINSON, 411 N. Maple St., Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Western U. S. Part 3 *Colorado and Wyoming,* Homesteading. Sheep and Cattle Raising.—WILLIAM WELLS, Sisters, Oregon.

Western U. S. Part 4 *Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, 357 Chestnut Street, Reno, Nevada.

Western U. S. Part 5 *Idaho and Surrounding Country.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.* Especially early history of Missouri Valley.—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 2 *Missouri and Arkansas, Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Especially wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 3 *Ind., Ill., Mich., Miss., and Lake Michigan.* Also claiming, natural history legends.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

Middle Western U. S. Part 4 *Mississippi River.* Also routes, connections, itineraries; river-steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions about working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears.—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa.

Middle Western U. S. Part 5 *Lower Mississippi River (St. Louis down), Atchafalaya across La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottoms.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also seamanship, navigation, courses, distances, reefs and shoal lights, landmarks, charts; laws, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 1863 E. 57th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 2 *Western Maine. For all territory west of the Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me.

Eastern U. S. Part 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I. and Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1332, New Haven, Conn.

Eastern U. S. Part 4 *Adirondacks, New York.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 5 *Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia.* Also historical places.—LAWRENCE EDMUND ALLEN, 29-C Monongalia Street, Charleston, West Virginia.

Eastern U. S. Part 6 *Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard.* Also sawmilling.—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 7 *The Great Smokies and the Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for five cents.)*

✠*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon for three cents.)*

BUSH DEVILS

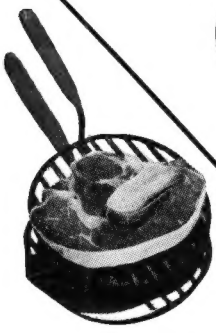
A Novelette of the Venezuelan Wilds and Two Intrepid White Men in Quest of Raw Diamonds

By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

Also in this issue:

BLACK FLAG, a tale of sea wolves and the Jolly Roger. by TALBOT MUNDY; COME ON, ZOUAVES, a story of the French Colonial troops, by GEORGES SURDEZ; JIGGERS, a novelette of British South Africa, by L. PATRICK GREENE; HALLMARK OF CASTRO, a story of the airways, by ANDREW A. CAFFREY; THE LAUGHING FOX, a story of the Far North sealing stations, by A. DEHERRIES SMITH; BAYOU MAN, a tale of a Louisiana maze, by JAMES MITCHELL CLARKE; TWO ROUNDS, a story of India, by GANPAT; and Part II of DEATH IN TIGER VALLEY, a novel of the Siamese teak forests, by REGINALD CAMPBELL.

WHAT KIND OF A FIGURE DO YOU CUT WHEN YOU CARVE?



Many a man who sniffs danger with all the relish of a bloodhound, and puts on his gun with his pants, turns pale and mops his brow when he sees a tame chicken and a carving knife placed before him. Don't sir, let circumstances get the best of you. Send today for the Delineator Cookbook with its complete and simple directions on the right way to tackle everything that comes on platters.

No. 34
$2.65

.....in cards, sponges, tea leaves, letters and smoke!

Men like these!

GRILLED STEAK

You can cook it, of course, but do you know all the other good things to eat out of doors. Send for

No. 35..PICNICS AND PORCH MEALS..25c
No. 48..YEARBOOK OF DELINEATOR RECIPES 25c
No. 49..Second YEARBOOK OF DELINEATOR RECIPES 25c

With a johnny-cake recipe a man can make.

No. 43..BEVERAGES FOR PARTIES 10c

Lots of suggestions if your imagination fails.

No. 56.. DOGS.....25c

Training, feeding, care.

FORTUNES

21..FIVE WAYS TO TELL FORTUNES 15c
46..SECRETS OF HAND-WRITING 10c
27..WHAT'S IN YOUR NAME 15c
51..GAMES FOR GROWN UPS 15c
54..FUN AND LAUGHTER PARTIES ... 25c
25..FIVE MINUTE PLAYS 25c

SEND This Coupon NOW!

DELINEATOR INSTITUTE, 161 Sixth Ave., N. Y.

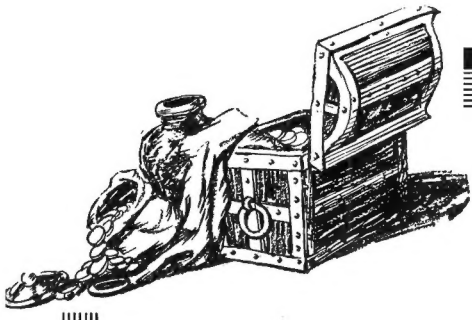
Please send me numbers I have encircled.
I enclose ☐ stamps ☐ money order ☐ check amounting to.....

No. 34	$2.65	No. 21	15c
No. 35	25c	No. 46	10c
No. 48	25c	No. 27	15c
No. 49	25c	No. 51	15c
No. 43	10c	No. 54	25c
No. 56	25c	No. 25	25c

Name .....

Address 415

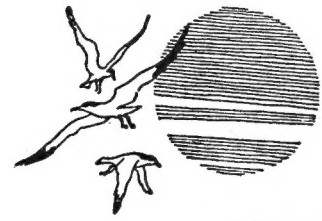
City ..... State .....



15 Issues

of

Adventure



AN EXCEPTIONAL OFFER TO LOVERS OF ADVENTURE . . .

JUST to get better acquainted . . . ADVENTURE is giving you this opportunity to have the next fifteen issues come by mail at a saving of close to 50% of the price you would pay at the newsstand. Lose yourself with *W. C. Tuttle* and Hashknife and Sleepy, with *Harold Lamb* and his crusading epics, with *Talbot Mundy* and his war dramas, with *Ared White* and his spy thrillers, with *T. S. Stribling, Arthur O. Friel, Raymond S. Spears, Georges Surdez, Gordon Young, Hugh Pendexter* and a gallant array of other writers. After a heavy day, go into a huddle with ADVENTURE and let the rest of the world go by.

for $2.00

USE THIS COUPON TODAY

ADVENTURE
The Butterick Publishing Company
161 Sixth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Dept. A4B

Gentlemen: That Special Subscription Offer looks good to me. Here's my Two Dollars to bring me the next Fifteen Issues by mail.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

This Introductory Offer is good for new *Adventure* subscribers only. Good only in the U. S. A.